

# THE JAMES BOYS WEEKLY.

Containing Stories of Adventure.

Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at the New York Post Office, January 24, 1901, by Frank Tousey.

No. 50.

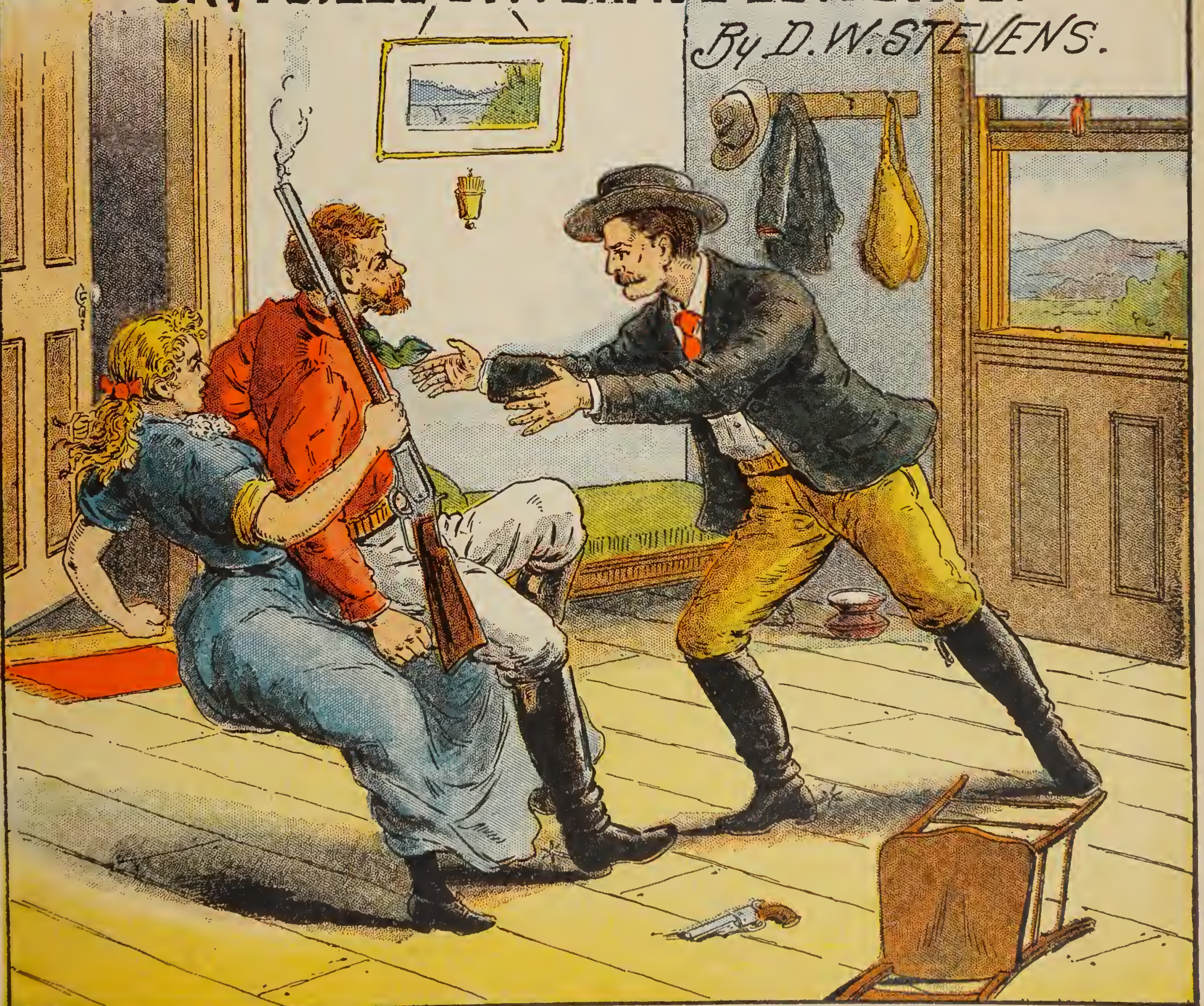
NEW YORK, DECEMBER 6, 1901.

Price 5 Cents.

## THE JAMES BOYS' BOLDEST RAID;

### OR, FOILED BY A BRAVE DETECTIVE.

By D. W. STEVENS.



Quick as a flash of lightning the detective sprang at Jesse. Mary fired. The bullet went through the wall of the house. Ere she could fire again the detective hurled Jesse at her with such force that both of them went down in a heap.







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## The James Boys' Boldest Raid:

OR,

## FOILED BY A BRAVE DETECTIVE.

By D. W. STEVENS.

### CHAPTER I.

#### THE TWO PENNILESS TRAVELERS AND JESSE JAMES.

"Halt! Hands up!"

"Hello! What's up?"

"Hands up!"

"Hands up! What for?"

"Hold up, you fools, or you'll get an ounce of cold lead!"

"Oh, don't shoot!"

"Well, keep your hands up. Go through 'em, Jim."

Jesse James, the famous highwayman, and Jim Cummins, one of his companions in crime, met two well-dressed travelers on horseback on a well-known road in central Missouri and held them up.

The bandit chief gave orders, and they were obeyed.

The two travelers rode good horses and appeared well-to-do financially. The two highwaymen had dashed out of the woods to the roadside and halted them.

Cummins searched their persons as they sat on their horses and held up their hands.

"Why, they haven't got a cent!" he exclaimed, after searching them.

"They haven't?"

"No—at least, I can't find any on them," said Cummins.

"Have you no money?" Jesse asked one of the men.

"Not a cent," was the reply.

"Get down."

"Do you mean for us to dismount?"

"Yes."

They dismounted.

"Keep your hands up."

They did so.

"Have they no arms, Jim?"

"No."

"Lead your horses into the woods here," the chief said, leading the way.

They hesitated and looked at him.

"Well, what's the matter?" Jesse James asked.

"How can we lead our horses and hold up our hands, too?" one of them asked.

"You may take 'em down—you are not armed. Now, come on," and they led their horses into the woods, Jim Cummins bringing up the rear.

When about one hundred yards from the road the bandit chief halted, and said:

"This is far enough. Search 'em again, Jim."

Again did Cummins go through all their pockets and clothing, but with the same result as before.

He did not find one penny on them.

Jesse James looked at them in a puzzled sort of way, and said:

"You are evidently gentlemen of means, and it is not customary for such men to travel without money. Take off your shoes."

They obeyed, and still no money was found.

"Rip up the lining of their coats and vests, Jim."

"Why not satisfy yourself without ruining our clothes?" one of the prisoners asked.

"We make it a rule to destroy the clothing of those who bring us no revenue," was the bandit chief's reply.

"The deuce!"

"Yes."

"I never heard of that before."

"You have much to learn yet."

"That's very small business."

"Yes; but not so small as traveling about the country without a cent of money."

Jim cut the two coats all to pieces, and then began at the vests.

"This is the meanest thing I ever heard of," said the smaller of the two prisoners.

"Not half as mean as going about the country without the price of a drink in your clothes," retorted Jim.

"Search the saddles, Jim," said Jesse James, and the saddles were taken off the two horses and subjected to a rigid examination.

Still no money was found.

"Take off your clothes."

They both turned pale.



"Take 'em off!" ordered Jesse, in a tone of voice that made them quake with fear.

They drew off their shirts, and, finally, all their clothes lay on the ground.

Jim searched them, and then looked up at his chief.

"They have swallowed their money, Jim," Jesse said. "Cut 'em open and get it."

"My God!" gasped the taller of the two prisoners, trembling like a leaf and looking ashen-faced in the face. "you don't mean that!"

"I mean to find out where your money is," Jesse replied. "Men don't go round the country with no money about 'em. Rip 'em open, Jim."

Cummins drew a bowie knife and started toward the taller of the two men.

The panic-stricken prisoners gave a yell and sprang away through the bushes, running with the speed of a wild deer.

Crack!

Crack!

Both Jim and Jesse fired at him, and while they were doing so the other prisoner dashed away in the opposite direction.

Crack!

Crack!

The bandits wheeled and sent two bullets after him.

But in a moment he was out of sight, too, but naked as a new-born babe.

"Ha, ha, ha!" Jesse James laughed, and Cummins chuckled.

"Let 'em go!" said the chief. "It'll teach 'em a lesson on traveling about the country without any money."

"Yes," and Jim chuckled again. "Lord, but they were badly scared."

"Of course. They really thought we meant to rip 'em up as you did their coats."

"Yes, I believe they did."

"We have a couple of good horses, though."

"Yes. We must get 'em to Harshaw's by night."

"We can do that easily enough if we go over beyond Red Creek and take the old post road."

"That's so; let's do that. I'll take this one," and the bandit chief took the reins of one of the horses and prepared to lead him still deeper into the forest.

Cummins prepared to follow him, and as he did so he remarked:

"There's a mystery about those two chaps which I can't understand."

"I can," said Jesse.

"What is it?"

"They sent their money through by mail or express for fear we would get it."

"Ah! then it serves 'em right."

"Yes."

"It's the worst plight we have ever left anyone in."

"Yes."

Then Jim chuckled again after a little while, and Jesse looked back and asked:

"What is it that's funny?"

"I was thinking of those two fellows leaping about in the woods and slapping at mosquitoes and flies."

"Oh, they'll stay by the roadside and hail someone who will get 'em clothes from some farm-house. Come on. We want to get out of this neighborhood about as fast as we can."

"Yes; go ahead."

They pushed on through the woods for an hour or so, when they emerged into a road that led them to the old post road, which had been a great highway in the days before the railroads came.

Once in the road they made good time. When passing a farm-house they rode at an ordinary pace, so as not to attract attention, and on meeting the others they would go slow.

But it was not a much-traveled road now, so they made good speed on their way to Harshaw's place, which was a large farm on the west side of the big river.

When half way, they met a carriage containing an elderly couple, and Jim wanted to hold it up.

"No," said Jesse: "we are too near Harshaw's for that."

"I think they would pan out well," Jim remarked, as he gazed at the carriage.

"No doubt of that. But we are to keep off this road and not have any posess anywhere near Harshaw's place."

"Yes, I know."

They rode on, and when within a mile of the place, turned into the woods and waited for the sun to go down.

That detained them an hour, after which they emerged from the woods, rode up to the farm house, and sang out:

"Hello!"

"Hello!" came from the barn, on the other side of the road.

"By George!" said Jim, in an undertone, "that's Bob's voice."

"I think so, too."

A dark form came toward them.

"That you, Bob?" Jim asked.

"Yes; and that you, Jim?"

"Yes."

Bob Younger, one of the three Younger brothers, who were members of the James Boys' band, came up and shook hands with Cummins.

"When did you get here, Bob?" Jesse James asked him.

"Last night. I am waiting for Frank and Clell."

"What are they coming here for?" Jesse asked, as he dismounted.

"They are to bring in some fine stock to-night some time. I brought a very fine one in last night."

"Where did you get him?"

"Picked him up over on the River Road."

"Where is Harshaw?"

"Down at the cave."

"He must have quite a stock on hand."

"Yes, he has."

"When is he going to send 'em away?"

"One batch goes to-night."

"Good! He should not keep too many on hand at one time," and Jesse turned and led his horse through the gate that opened into the barnyard.

Jim and Bob followed him.

He passed round the barn and followed along a path that led down the hill toward the river.

It was not so dark but one could see the path quite well, and the bandit chief seemed to know the way well enough.

The path led down to what looked like a gorge running toward the river, and on the other side of the gorge the hill assumed the shape of a bluff.

As soon as he was well under the shadow of the bluff he gave a signal, the third note of the whippoorwill.

Just a minute or two later the bushes on his right parted, and a voice said:

"All right—come in."

He turned and pushed through the bushes, and a moment later he was going into the mouth of a cavern under the bluff.

A man with a lighted lantern in his hand met him.

Holding up the lantern, so as to get a look at the face of the bandit chief, the man said:

"I didn't expect you here to-night."

"No; nor did I expect to come, but I had a couple fall into my hands, and thought I had better turn 'em over to you at once."

"Bring 'em in and let me see 'em."

The two horses were led in and he made a minute inspection of them, after which he took a bottle of brownish fluid and rubbed some of it on the horses in various places.

When that was done he said:

"Their owners wouldn't know them in the morning."

"But we don't want their owners to see 'em, all the same," remarked Jesse.

"No; of course not."

"How many have you to send out now?" Jesse James asked.

"Nine."

"Ain't that too many?"

"No; it won't make any difference."

"Very well," and Jesse called to Siroc.

The black beauty came prancing up to his master.

Jesse led him to a stall and proceeded to rub him down, give him food and water and see that he was made comfortable for the night.

Then he turned and made his way back to the barn and thence to the house, whither Jim and Bob followed him.

Mrs. Harshaw received them in a very gracious manner and showed them up-stairs into a room, from which no ray of light could be seen on the outside.

She was quite a handsome woman, not above thirty years of age, tall and of a fine figure.

When she smiled her face was very pleasant to look upon, for it had roses and dimples, and her teeth were like pearls.

"Have you had supper?" she asked of the bandit chief.

"No."

"Nor you?" and she turned to Jim.

"Not a bite," replied Jim.

"Supper for two, then?"

"Yes."

"Two more will be here some time to-night," put in Bob, as she turned to leave the room.

She bowed, and when she had gone Jesse turned to Bob and said:

"You have been told often enough about telling anyone of the movements of the members."

Bob looked up as if quite surprised.

"You told her that two more were coming. If a spy had been near he would have gained a point."

"So he would from what you have just said," returned Bob.

"How so?"

"You repeated what I said."

"Yes, so I did; but you were the cause of it," replied Jesse.



"I was careless, I admit."

"Of course; but it won't do. You must be careful at all times."

"Yes, yes, all right. Have a smoke," and he drew half a dozen cigars from his pocket and held them out toward Jesse and Jim.

They each took one, but said they would not smoke till after supper.

Soon after supper Frank James and Clell Miller arrived, each bringing a fine horse which he had captured that day.

They were surprised at finding Jesse there, and up in that room from which no light could be seen they told the story of their day's work.

Suddenly they were startled by the sounds of horses' hoofs on the hard road-bed which lay between the house and the barn.

"Hello, Harshaw!" they heard from the newcomers at the gate.

They heard Harshaw go out to the gate, and, in a little while, the horsemen go thundering down the road again.

Jesse waited to hear what it meant, and by and by Harshaw's wife came up and said:

"It was a posse after Frank and Miller."

"The deuce!" exclaimed Frank.

"Yes. They traced you past Jobson's, a mile up the road, and my husband told 'em you had just passed here, leading two horses, and went along with 'em to help catch you."

"Did Ben go?" Jesse asked, looking quite surprised.

"Yes. I heard him say he believed they could run you down, and that he would go along and help do it."

Jesse laughed, and said:

"Ben has a mighty level head on his shoulders, Mrs. Bessie."

"Yes," she replied, with a loving smile, "and a mighty good heart in his bosom. I wouldn't give him in exchange for any other man in the world."

"Good for you!" said Jesse. "I am not afraid to put my life in his hands, and have done so many a time."

"You don't know when he will return, then?" Jim asked.

"No," she replied. "He will lead 'em as far away as he can, though."

"Of course," said Jesse. "That's what he went with 'em for. Ben knows his business."

Mrs. Harshaw went down-stairs to her sitting-room and sat down with her knitting in her hands.

"Frank!" said Jesse to his brother.

"Well?"

"You and Clell must have been very careless in your work to have had a posse so close on your heels."

"Yes. I can't think, though, how they got after us so quickly."

"Nor can I," added Clell.

"Nor can I see wherein we were careless," put in Frank.

"Ben will find out all about it," Jesse said, "and you may as well wait till he comes back."

"I don't like this horse business nohow," said Jim.

"Nor do I," said Clell, promptly. "One can't get away with him when hard pushed."

"And has to take more chances," said Bob. "I'm in favor of dropping it."

"So am I," Jesse remarked. "But we'll wait till Ben comes back," and so they decided, and went to bed.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE BUTTING MATCH AND BANK ROBBERY.

Ben Harshaw did not return to his farm till noon the next day, and then he had four of the posse with him.

His wife prepared dinner for them, and as they sat at the table and ate, Jesse James and four of his band sat in an adjoining room and heard all that passed.

It did the bandit chief's heart good to hear Farmer Harshaw denounce the James Boys and tell how gladly he would assist in lynching every member of the band.

The meal ended, the others remounted their jaded horses and rode away, the last words of Harshaw being:

"Let me know when you want to chase 'em again."

When they were gone Jesse grasped his hand and said:

"You played 'em well, Ben! Who were they after this time?"

"Frank and Clell, and they had followed 'em up close, too. Had any suspicion ever rested on me they would have returned here to make a search."

"Yes. That's for having a good character," and Jesse James laughed.

"Yes. It stands by a man in a pinch sometimes."

While Harshaw was gone with the posse one of his trusty agents took the stolen horses down the river and delivered them to a man in another county, who sent them down into Arkansas to be sold.

The James Boys were now waiting for night to come, in order to leave the place under cover of darkness.

They were extremely careful in that locality, as it was one of the places they wanted to keep free from suspicion.

While they were waiting for night to come a man rode up to the gate and called for Harshaw.

The latter went out to see him, as he knew who he was.

"Jesse James and one of his band stopped two men over on the river road yesterday morning," the man said to him, "and took their horses and clothes, leaving them naked in the woods."

"The villains!" exclaimed Harshaw.

"The whole upper end of the county are out looking for them."

"Then they ought to catch 'em."

"Yes; but there ain't no horse in the world that can catch up with Jesse James's black horse."

"I reckon you're right. They ought to waylay 'im and hold him. That's the way to get him."

"Yes, that's so; and he'd even slip outen their grip. The villain must have a charmed life."

"It looks that way."

"Well, I must be going," and the man rode on, little dreaming that the bandit chief was within a stone's throw of him at that moment.

Of course Harshaw posted Jesse and the others, and they decided to go in another direction.

As soon as it was dark they mounted their horses and rode away, taking good care not to be seen by anyone living in the vicinity.

In two hours they were some twelve or fifteen miles away from Harshaw's place.

It was a clear, starlit night, and they decided to ride on to Ennisville and put up at the hotel there, claiming to be a part of a sheriff's posse looking for the James Boys.

The village was some ten miles away and on the railroad.

They reached it a little before midnight and rode up to a hotel, of which there were two in the place.

There were five of them, and each wore a disguise for fear of meeting someone who knew them.

The landlord had gone to bed when they arrived, and a youth of some seventeen years, the landlord's hopeful son, got up and assigned them to rooms, after they had seen their horses attended to.

When they came down to breakfast in the morning, the landlord greeted them effusively, and asked each if he had slept well.

They said they had and that a good breakfast was the next thing in order.

"Any news of the James Boys?" he asked of Jesse James.

"Yes," replied the bandit, "they are out on the river road, in the upper end of the county, and we are hoping to be able to head 'em off down this way somewhere."

"What! five of you trying to head off Jesse James?"

"Yes; why not?" Jesse asked.

"Why, he's too much for any ten men in the State by himself."

"Bah!" said Jesse.

"Why, you don't know the man," the landlord said.

"No; but I know of him. I am an old soldier and know as much about war as he does. We would be glad to meet him and four of his men in a square out and out fight."

"Yes," added Cummins, "I once met him in a row at Kearney, and saw him skip out as lively as a cricket."

"Of course, he has to do that when a whole town is down on him. I'd like to see him behind the bars, or hear of his being killed," said the landlord, "but I don't want to meet him on the highway—not much."

Jesse smiled and chuckled over the exalted idea the landlord had of his prowess, and Jim and the others exchanged winks.

They had just finished breakfast and gone into the barroom to get cigars, when a sheriff's posse of some thirty men, well armed and mounted, dashed up to the hotel and dismounted.

The deputy sheriff was in command, and he ordered breakfast for the entire posse.

After breakfast the posse remounted their horses and rode away, leaving the James Boys behind at the hotel.

Quite a crowd had collected at the hotel to see the posse off, for at that time the James Boys were the sole topic of conversation in half the towns in the State.

Among them were two negroes, who soon got into a quarrel and threatened to use their razors on each other.

Jesse heard them talking, and said to one:

"You two mokes can't make anything by slashing each other with razors. I'll give you five dollars apiece to meet here at noon, in front of this hotel, and butt each other till one is knocked out."

"I'll do dat, boss!" exclaimed one.

"An' me, too!" cried the other. "I bu'st dat nigger's hade open, shuah!"

"I bu'st yo' hade offen yo'," said the other, shaking his bullet head menacingly.

"Well, I'll put the money up in the hands of the landlord here," said Jesse, taking two five-dollar bills from his wallet and turning them over to mine host.



It was then about nine o'clock, and the news of the butting match flew all over the village in less than an hour's time.

A little before noon every man who could leave his place of business was on hand in front of the hotel.

The two negroes came up, too, each with blood in his eyes.

There was such a crowd that no one noticed the five men leave and go to the stable.

They mounted their horses and rode round the back way from the stable to another street, and then turned toward the bank.

Only the cashier and one clerk were in as the five men entered.

The cashier came forward to his window, and was paralyzed at having a pistol thrust in his face.

"I want all the cash you have on hand," said Jesse James.

Bob and Jim went round to the open safe while Frank covered the clerk with his revolver.

"Just keep quiet now," said Jesse to the cashier, "and no harm will come to you. If you make us trouble we'll end all your troubles at once. Do you understand?"

"Yes," was the reply.

"Very well; hurry up there, boys!"

Jim and Bob did hurry up, and got thousands of dollars, which they stuffed into their pockets, handing some to Jesse and Frank.

"We've got it all, Jesse," said Jim, after they had secured all the cash.

"Come on, then."

They left the bank and ran out to their horses, sprang into their saddles and dashed away out of town.

"Help!"

"Thieves!"

"Robbers!"

"Stop 'em!" cried the cashier and clerk, running out into the street, hatless and coatless, yelling at the top of their voices.

But the two niggers were butting, and the crowd about them was yelling and shouting at them, hence the frantic cries of the cashier and clerk were not heard.

The cashier ran down the street till he reached the outskirts of the crowd.

The crowd was yelling, laughing and shouting encouragement to first one and then the other of the two darkies.

"The bank has been robbed!" the cashier yelled at the top of his voice.

"Five to three on Nick!" yelled a village sport at his side.

"Hooray for Black Joe!" yelled another behind him.

"Good—good! Butt 'im ag'in, Nick!"

"The bank has been robbed!"

"I's er comin', nigger!" yelled one of the darkies, as he made a rush at his enemy.

"Whoop! Go it, hard-heads!"

The cashier was in despair.

He could make no one hear him till one of the negroes was knocked out.

Then the crowd laughed, and began to scatter.

The cashier sprang upon the piazza of the hotel and sang out:

"Hold on, gentlemen!"

Everybody turned and looked at the pale-faced cashier, as he stood there bareheaded and coatless.

"While you were enjoying that butting match, Jesse James and four of his band came in and robbed the bank of every cent of ready cash!"

A howl went up from the crowd, for every business man in the town made his deposits there.

"I came up here as soon as they left, but I couldn't make one of you hear me!" the cashier cried. "It was Jesse James who got up that butting match."

"No, it can't be!" cried the landlord.

"Yes, it was. I heard one of the robbers call him Jesse, and he rode his black horse, too."

"Which way did he go?"

"They went out on the St. Jo road."

"How long has it been since they left?" one man asked.

"Half an hour at least."

"That gives 'em five miles. Let's run 'em down, boys!" and the man looked around at the crowd.

"Yes, yes! Run 'em down!" they responded.

"Get ready and come here as quick as you can!" and the speaker hurried away for his own horse and weapons.

The crowd dispersed, some to go back to business, and others to arm and pursue the bandits. But still more rushed to the bank with blanched faces to inquire about the money they had deposited there.

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE JAMES BOYS MEET A POSSE.

The James Boys dashed out of Ennisville with thousands of dollars of cold cash stuffed in their pockets.

It was a great public road, and they met quite a number of people coming into town.

The countrymen wondered why they rode so fast, and many thought they were engaged in testing the speed of their horses.

On, on, they went, mile after mile, and finally they plunged into a great forest to wait for their pursuers to go by.

They well knew the excited state of the people in the village, and that the chances were that they would not see the trail which led into the woods.

About two hundred yards from the roadside they halted and dismounted.

"That was well done, boys," Jesse said, as he looked around at his companions. "A bank cleaned out and not a shot fired."

"Yes," added Jim. "That's what I call slick work."

"Slick as grease," laughed Bob, as he pulled out great wads of bills from his pockets.

"Yes, slick as greased lightning," put in Clell Miller.

"Well, let's divvy up," said Jesse, "for we may have to scatter. Let every man carry his own pile," and he threw his pile on the ground at his feet.

The others did likewise, and then he sat down and counted the amount.

"Just a little over \$21,000," he said.

"That's \$4,200 each," remarked Frank.

"Yes," and Jesse divided it into five parcels, and each took one and stowed it away in his pockets.

"Hark! Sh!" and Jim Cummins rose to his feet and listened.

"They are coming like a whirlwind," Jesse said, as he heard the roar of a score of horses running at full speed along the highway.

They stood still and listened to see if the pursuers would go by or follow them into the woods.

"Ah! they have gone on!" said Jesse, and a smile came over his bronzed features as he heard the horses go thundering by up the road. "We have nothing to fear from them. Come on. We can go across the creek and strike another road about a mile beyond it," and he proceeded to lead Siroc through the woods toward a creek which ran toward the south about a quarter of a mile away.

It was an easy matter to get down to the creek, but not such an easy one to get their horses across it. Where it was not very deep the banks and bushes prevented them from crossing, so they had to go a mile further down ere they succeeded in finding a fordable place.

It was on a farm near a road that led in a direction they wanted to go, and they had to go up through the farm by a cattle path to the barn.

The farmer and two hired men were at the barn when they appeared.

"We want to go through to the road," said Jesse, as the farmer stared at them.

"Well, how come yer in thar?" the farmer asked.

"We have been hunting the James Boys," Jesse replied.

The farmer opened wide his eyes.

"Didn't find 'em, did yer?"

"Yes, I should say we did. We crowded Jesse himself so hard he had to leave his horse, and that's him there now."

"Why, his horse is too fast for yer ter crowd 'im!" exclaimed the farmer, with an incredulous expression in his voice and manner.

"Yes; so he is on a road, but not in the woods. A horse can't go dashing through the woods, and that's how we got him."

That seemed to settle it in the farmer's mind.

He opened the gate and let them pass through, and his admiring glances were on the black horse as long as he was in sight.

"Jesse James and three or four of his men are scattered about in those woods back there," said the bandit chief to the farmer, as he led Siroc through the barnyard to the gate that opened out into the road. "You want to be on the lookout for him."

"If he is there what are you leaving him for?" the farmer asked.

"To join the sheriff's posse and head him off. If he and his men should come here, pretend to be their friend and conceal 'em in your barn. Then hang a white rag on your gate-post so we may know it when we come by. You'll get half the reward if you do."

"I'll do it," and the farmer's eyes snapped as he spoke.

"Come on, boys!" and Jesse sprang into the saddle.

Frank and the others followed his example, and all five were soon scurrying down the road at a rattling pace.

Some four or five miles farther on they met a posse right in the bend of the road.

Jesse James was quick to seize the opportunity.

"Gentlemen," he sang out, "Jesse James and his gang are making for the forks of the road at old Zion Church, over on the Ennisville road. We have been on his trail for two days. Ten of our posse are behind him, and we are sent to head him off. Will you go with us?"

"Yes," said the man at the head of the posse, "but a force ought to go across through Allen's lane to see they don't get away by that route."

"That's so," admitted Jesse. "I think it likely they may come



that way. I must obey orders, though, and go where I was told. Suppose you go that way, and hide in the woods near the forks till they show up?"

"Yes; so I will!" and he turned and rode back half a mile with Jesse, going at full speed, and turned into Allen's lane.

"Good luck!" sang out Jesse, as he rode on down the main road. They gave him a cheer, for they believed they were getting the bandits hemmed in so as to make resistance worse than useless.

"I believe that fellow is Jesse James himself," said one of the posse to the leader, as they went galloping through the lane.

"Why so?"

"His black horse."

"Ah! I did not notice him."

"Well, I did."

"So did I," said another.

"Yes," put in still another, "that fellow was Jesse James as sure as you're born."

"I can't believe it," said the leader, shaking his head. "We'll go on and take the chances, anyhow."

"Yes; for they are out of our reach now. But I'll bet my farm he is Jesse James."

So they went on, and the bandits pushed on up the main road, bending almost double with laughter over the clever trick Jesse had played on the posse.

"Suppose we go over to Greene's place and lay up till morning?" suggested Jim.

"How can we get there from here?" Jesse asked.

"By going across the country a couple of miles," Jim replied.

"Do you know the way?"

"Yes."

"But would he like to have so many of us at one time?"

"Oh, he is all right. He was in the same brigade with us, and we all know he would not betray us."

"I have stopped there," said Frank.

"And so have I—and Bob," added Clell.

"I have, too," Jesse admitted.

"He'll do anything for money," put in Jim. "Ten dollars from each of us and a present to his wife would make us very welcome."

"And his wife's sister would be glad to see Bob, I know," put in Clell.

Bob did not say anything, and the others laughed at him.

"But he doesn't seem to want to go," said Jim.

"Well, to tell the truth, I don't," Bob replied.

"Why not?"

"We had a quarrel the last time I was there."

"Bah! Kiss her and make up and she'll be all smiles," and Jesse sprang into the saddle and led the way up the road to a point where Jim said they must cut across the fields. The latter took the lead and the others followed. Two hours later they struck another road and were soon on their way to Greene's place.

Greene had settled in an out-of-the-way place, and no one had suspected him of ever having harbored any of the bandits.

There had never been anything on that road to tempt the gang, hence they had never been seen in that locality.

They met Greene coming out of the woods a quarter of a mile from his house.

"Hello!" Jesse greeted him.

"Hello!" he replied; "what's up?"

"About half the country," Jesse replied. "We want to hide out for a day or two."

"Well, why don't you do it?"

"That's what we have come over here for," Jesse replied. "It will be worth \$100 a day to you to feed us and our horses, and see that we don't get caught."

Greene grinned.

He wanted money badly.

"That's a big job," he said.

"Yes; and big pay, too."

"Yes; so it is. But I don't want to get into no trouble, Jesse."

"Of course not. We are in more danger than you, so that is a guarantee that we will try not to get you into any."

"Well, if they don't see no black horse on my place they won't suspicion anything," said he as he looked at Siroc. "Keep your horses in the woods an' I'll feed 'em an' you, too."

"That's all right. Do you know of a safe place to keep 'em?"

"Yes."

"Where?"

"Back hyer. Come on," and he led the way into the woods.

They dismounted and led their horses into the woods to a place where a deep gorge ran between a high range of hills.

It was a wild, rugged place, and Jesse James was pleased with it.

"This will do in fair weather," he said.

"Yes," said Frank.

"Just the thing," put in Jim.

"They'd never find us here," observed Clell.

A spot in the deep gorge was found where an open level, covering

a quarter of an acre, and having a growth of big oaks stretched from base to base of the hills.

"This will do," Jesse said. "Go back to the house now and have supper prepared for five hungry men. When we come back we can bring oats or corn enough for our horses."

Greene returned to the house and the bandits proceeded to inspect the locality, each one looking for a spot where he could tie up his horse so as to leave him plenty of comfortable room.

"Great Scott, boys!" cried Jim, "just come here and look at this!"

They ran to where he stood in a clump of bushes, at the base of the bluff on the west side of the gorge.

"What is it?" Jesse asked.

"Look at that," and he pointed to the mouth of a cave under the bluff. "That's a regular hotel for us."

"A cave, as I live!" said Frank.

"Yes," added Clell. "At least, it has a mouth like one."

"Well, let's see what it is," Jesse said. "Light your lanterns and we'll go in."

Each man lit his dark lantern and drew his weapon.

"All ready?" Jesse asked.

"Yes."

"Come on, then."

He led the way in.

The others followed him into a narrow passage for some forty or fifty feet, when it finally developed into an immense vaulted chamber.

Flashing their lights about, they found the floor quite level.

"This is grand!" said Jesse.

"Yes; and the air is dry and not close at all," said Frank.

"It's as big as a church," remarked Jim, "and the passage is just wide enough for a horse to come in."

"Yes. Let's see how far it goes," and Jesse again led the search party.

This time he went round by the walls to see if there were any more passages.

They found many crevices, but none large enough for them to enter.

"Hello! Here's a spring coming from the rocks!" he said.

"Glad to see it," said Jim. "I am as dry as a fish," and he knelt and drank some of the water.

"How is it?" Bob asked.

"Cold and sweet," was the reply.

"This is our den, boys," said Jesse, "when we have to seek a refuge."

"We couldn't wish a better one," said Clell.

"No. I am glad we found it. Let's get our horses inside and then see if we can get up a door for that passage."

They went out and led the horses in, one at a time, and each selected a place for his own—all on one side of the big chamber.

Then they cut stakes and drove them deep into the dirt floor and fastened their horses to them to prevent them wandering about in the dark.

"Now let's go over to Greene's and get some supper for ourselves and feed for our horses," said Jesse.

"I don't believe he knows anything about this cave," said Bob, as they emerged into the open air again.

"I don't think he does, either," Jesse said.

"Better not tell him, then," suggested Clell.

"Oh, yes; let him know," replied Jesse. "It is better that he should know it, for I think it would relieve his mind a good deal if he knew of it."

They went to the house—all but Bob.

"I'll stay here and stand guard over the horses," he said.

Jim and Clell laughed, and he added:

"Don't say anything about my being here."

"Why, Greene has seen you!"

"I don't think he did, as I kept back as much as I could when he was talking to Jesse."

"What's the matter?" Jesse asked him.

"May and I had a quarrel when I saw her last, and she gave me such a tongue lashing that I don't care to meet her again."

"Well, that's all right. Stay here, then."

The four went up to the house and were met and welcomed by Greene and his wife.

May Evans, Mrs. Greene's sister, was a buxom young woman of some five-and-twenty years, and quite good-looking.

She had seen all the James Boys and knew them.

She shook hands with each as he entered the house.

"Why, where's Bob?" she asked of Clell.

"Oh, he didn't come this time," he replied.

"Yes, he did."

"Oh, no, he didn't."

"Yes, he did. Tom said he did, and we have supper for five," and she looked hard at Clell as she spoke.

Jesse saw that Greene had told her Bob was with the party, so he said:

"Clell means that he did not come up to supper with us. I told



him to stand guard over the horses till we returned. We'll take his supper to him."

"Of course," said Jim. "Someone else will have to stand guard in the morning."

"Yes," added Jesse. "We have to do those things by turns, you know."

"Where are the horses?" she asked.

"In the woods back there," and he pointed over his shoulder with his thumb.

She had a strange look in her eyes, and it struck Jesse as not being a very loving one.

But she turned away to help her sister in the dining-room, and nothing more was said at the time.

After supper she said to Jesse James, as he was going out to the barn with Greene:

"Tell Bob to come up and get his supper. I want to see him."

## CHAPTER IV.

### HELD UP BY A WOMAN.

When two hours had passed and Bob had not appeared for his supper, May Evans made up her mind to go out into the woods after him.

She waited till Jesse James came back to the house with her brother-in-law, and said to him:

"Bob has not come for his supper."

"Hasn't he?"

"No."

"Why didn't Jim take it to him?"

"Because I told him to send Bob after it."

Jesse frowned, and then smiled.

"What's the row between you and Bob?" he asked.

"Ask him," she replied.

"Shall I tell him you gave him permission to explain?"

"Yes; and tell him to tell the truth or nothing at all."

"All right. Let me have his supper and I'll take it to him."

"No. He must come after it."

"But if he won't?"

"Then he'll go hungry!" and her eyes snapped.

Jesse saw it was useless to talk with her, and started for the cave.

"Bob, you won't get any supper to-night," said Jesse, when he got back to the cave.

"No," replied Bob. "I'm pretty hungry, but I reckon I can stand it."

"She's mad enough to kill."

"Yes."

"How about breakfast?"

"I'll have to go elsewhere for it."

"Better meet her and make up with her," Jesse suggested.

Bob shook his head.

He was not a coward, but he was afraid of the girl.

"No," he said; "I won't meet her."

"Then you had better go in the morning, for I think she'll shoot as soon as she gets a glimpse of you."

"Yes."

Bob was a hungry man that night, but he did not dare to go up to the house for his supper.

Jesse wondered that Greene did not get something for him and bring it out to the cave.

He didn't know that Greene did do so. But Greene was not aware of the existence of that cave, hence he returned to the house with the lunch.

Early the next morning, ere the sun was up, Bob led his horse out of the cave and through the woods to the roadside.

There he sprang into the saddle, and was about to dash away up the road, when:

"Halt! Hands up!" startled him.

He threw up his hands, and May Evans stepped out into the road with a Winchester in her hands.

"Oh, is it you, May?"

"Yes, it's me, Bob," she replied.

"Well, you did give me a scare. You held me up like an old hand at the business."

"Yes. I am a better shot, though," and she held the Winchester ready for instant use. "I want you to drop your weapons to the ground."

"What for?"

"Don't ask any questions. Do as I say or I'll drop you as quick as lightning."

"Good heavens, May! what's the—Yes! there they are!" and as she raised the rifle to her shoulder he very quickly dropped the weapons to the ground.

She kicked them into the bushes out of sight, and then said: "Now ride on and I'll follow you. If you try to get away I'll show you how fast bullets can travel."

Bob turned pale as death, but did not say a word.

He rode forward at a walk and she followed on foot.

It was seven miles to the county jail and they were going in that direction.

Two miles from Greene's place they struck the main road.

"Which way?" he asked.

"To the left," she replied.

"That goes to town?"

"Yes."

"What are you going there for?"

"To land you in jail."

"Eh?"

"To land you in jail," she repeated.

"May, you don't mean that?"

"Yes, I do."

"You can't mean it?"

"But I do. Go on!"

"That means death to me."

"Yes. That's what you deserve."

"I—I won't go!"

She raised her Winchester and covered him.

"Go on or you'll die right there!" she said.

There was blood in her eye and he saw it.

He rode forward to the left and did not look back again till he heard the sounds of horses' hoofs on the road behind him.

Then he looked back in the hope that Jesse James and the rest of the band were coming to his rescue.

But his heart sank in his bosom like a lump of lead when he saw Sheriff Timberlake riding down upon him at the head of a posse of nearly a score of men.

He stopped and, wheeling his horse round so as to face her, said:

"That's Sheriff Timberlake. You won't betray me, May?"

"No; but I'll let him take you to jail," and she aimed the Winchester at him to keep him from making a break.

"Hello!" cried the sheriff, as he rode up, "what's the trouble here?"

"He is one of the James Boys," said the girl.

"So he is! I've met you before, young man. You are one of the Younger boys."

"Yes, Bob Younger," said May. "Will you take him to jail?"

"Of course I will," and the posse surrounded Bob and bound him.

The sheriff dismounted, took off his hat to May, and said:

"You are the bravest young lady in all Missouri."

She blushed, and rested the butt of her rifle on the ground.

"Will you give me your name, miss?" the sheriff asked.

"My, no!"

"Why not?"

"I don't want to get into the papers."

"But we should know who has done what hundreds of men have been trying to do for months."

"It wasn't hard to do. I met him in the road and got the drop on him."

"Was he alone?"

"Yes."

"Where?"

"About two miles from here."

"I know who she is," said one of the posse.

"Who is she?" the sheriff demanded.

May looked up and recognized the son of a well-to-do farmer who lived seven miles from her father's place.

She was not really acquainted with him, but she cried out:

"Please don't tell him—please don't!"

The young man dismounted, came up to her side, raised his hat, and said:

"We have never been introduced, but I am glad to make your acquaintance now. You know me, do you not?"

"Yes—you are Jack Mills."

"Yes. May I speak to you in private?"

"Yes, if the gentlemen will excuse us."

"Certainly," said the sheriff.

Young Mills, a stalwart man of some three-and-twenty years of age, tendered his arm to her. She took it and they walked some fifty feet away from the party.

"Miss Evans," he said, "I want to ask you to be my wife."

"My!" she gasped, looking up at him in utter amazement.

"I mean it. I have admired you ever since I first saw you last spring. I am well able to take care of a wife. Will you have me?"

"It's so sudden. Give me a week to answer you."

"Yes. Shall I come to your home?"

"Yes."

"One week from to-day?"

"Yes."



"Very well," and he led her back to the party which surrounded Bob.

One man, a widower, in the party, said to her:

"Young lady, I don't know your name, and don't care, as for that matter. The sheriff here knows mine, and he'll tell you I am all right, and that I have one of the best farms in the country. I've been a widower for two years, but I'll be a married man in ten minutes if you'll marry me. What do you say?"

"Mercy! are you men crazy?" she exclaimed, in real astonishment.

"Not quite," said the widower, "but I am in dead earnest, though. Tell her I am all right, sheriff."

"Yes; Mr. Harris is all right, miss, and owns one of the best farms in the county. You might marry a younger man and do a great deal worse."

"I was once engaged to a younger man," she replied, looking up at Bob, "but he turned out to be a vagabond, and I dropped him. I'll give my name to the sheriff, Mr. Harris, and he'll give you my answer inside of a week."

"Give it now and say yes," urged the widower.

"Oh, if I give it now I'd say no."

"Then wait a week."

The posse roared with laughter, and the prisoner had a sickly smile on his face.

"I'll go home now," said May, "if you will excuse me," and she looked up at Sheriff Timberlake.

"Certainly, miss," the sheriff said.

"Let us escort you home," suggested one of the party.

"No—no! Take him to jail!" she exclaimed, as she turned and walked down the road.

"Give her three cheers, boys!" said Timberlake, and every man gave three cheers and a tiger for the brave girl as she wended her way along the road.

She didn't look back once, but hurried on till a bend in the road hid her from view.

"The villain!" she hissed, through her pretty teeth. "And I loved him so. It serves me right for loving a highway robber. Jesse James will be awfully angry with me for what I have done, but I have Tom's Winchester and know how to use it. They had better keep away from me if they don't want to get hurt."

She was soon at home again, and when Tom Greene saw her come in with his deadly Winchester he turned pale.

"Did you shoot him, May?"

"No."

"Did you see him?"

"Yes."

"What did you do?"

"Held him up and delivered him to Sheriff Timberlake."

"What!" he gasped.

"Held him up and delivered him to the sheriff," she repeated, as she restored the rifle to its usual place.

"My God! you have ruined me!" he said.

"No, I haven't. Go and tell Jesse James what I have done, and say that I alone am responsible for it."

"No. I am not that sort of a man. I'll say I am responsible."

"Well, what is it?" Jesse James asked, coming in at that moment.

"I have just come in from delivering Bob to the sheriff," said May, before her brother-in-law could answer.

Jesse saw she was in earnest, and asked:

"How did you do it?"

"With Tom's Winchester," and then she told him the story of her adventure that morning, adding:

"Neither Tom nor Ellen knew anything about it. I alone am responsible for it."

"Did you tell Timberlake where we were?"

"No—not a word."

"Well, it serves him right, I reckon. I don't know anything about your quarrel with him."

"It does serve him right," said May. "I am not going to say a word to any living soul that I ever knew one of the James Boys, and I don't want them to say they ever knew me. You can come here as often as you please, and——"

"No; we won't come any more," Jesse said, interrupting her.

He turned on his heel and left the house, going straight for the woods in which the new-found cave was situated.

"Boys," he said, "the sheriff has got Bob and has taken him to jail," and he then told them how May Evans had held him up and marched him over to the main road.

The bandits were astonished at first.

Then they roared with laughter.

"It's rough on Bob," said Cummins, "but serves him right. He never would be honest with the girls. It's a wonder she didn't plunk him with a bullet."

"We'd get along better if you fellows would let the girls alone," Jesse said. "We must leave here to-night."

## CHAPTER V.

## THE MYSTERY OF CHALK BLUFF.

As soon as the stars came out, the bandits emerged from the cave and made their way to the road. Springing into their saddles, they rode off in a direction opposite that taken by Bob when May Evans held him up.

They dreaded meeting a posse coming from town, for Jesse James had no faith in the girl's assertion that she had not told anything about the bandits.

"She is mad," Jesse said, "and when a woman is mad and out for vengeance it is well to keep out of her way."

"That's the solid truth," remarked Cummins. "I know something about that myself."

"Bob does, too, by this time," said Frank.

"May is not a girl to be trifled with," Clell remarked.

"One never knows what a woman will do who is crossed in love," Jesse remarked, "so one had better deal fairly with her. Come on now, and keep quiet and well together," and he led off up the road at a good canter.

Jesse had no particular destination in view. He simply did not care to risk a night in that cave after hearing of the arrest of Bob.

On reaching the old post road, he turned toward the river and they rode more leisurely, like a party of gentlemen out for an evening jaunt.

The following morning found them close to the road, preparing to start out for new adventures.

"Hark!" and Jim turned toward the road and stood in a listening attitude.

Two horsemen were coming, going toward the river, and the bandits moved up nearer to the road to see if there was any game there for them.

The two horsemen rode leisurely by, and Jim remarked:

"That's Cole Younger's horse, or I am blind."

"I thought it was, too!" exclaimed Clell.

"Give the signal and see," suggested Jesse.

Jim gave it, and the two horsemen at once reined up and listened. Cummins repeated the signal, and the man on the big bay replied to it.

"Ah! it's Cole!" exclaimed Jesse, dashing out into the road, followed by the others.

"Hello!"

"Hello!"

They met and shook hands—Cole and Hite being the newcomers.

"We've been looking for you," said Cole, as they had finished their greeting.

"I am glad you have found us," Jesse replied.

"Bob is in jail, I hear," Cole said.

"Yes."

"Bagged by a woman, they say."

"Yes; and some day one will kill him," remarked Jesse.

"Yes; I'm afraid so. They will run after him."

"Blame him, Cole—not the girls. He alone is to blame."

"Yes; I reckon you're right. They're talking of sending him to St. Louis for safe-keeping."

"The dence!"

"Yes."

"That won't do."

"No."

"Of course not."

"We must rescue him."

"Yes."

"And at once."

"How did you hear of it?"

"I saw it in the papers."

"When?"

"This morning."

"When are they going to do it?"

"To-morrow or next day."

"Is that their intention?"

"That's what the paper said."

"Did the paper say who the woman was?"

"It said she was known, but her name was withheld at her request. Do you know who she is?"

"Yes."

"Who is she?"

"May Evans."

"What! Tom Greene's wife's sister?"

"Yes."

"Did she betray him?"

"No. She had a quarrel with him and he went back on her. She held him up with Tom's Winchester and marched him to jail."

"You know all about it, then?"

"Yes. She told me herself."

"Well, she has nerve."



"Yes, plenty of it. You don't want to fool with her. She is game all the way through."

"Well, if they send Bob to St. Louis we'll never get him out again."

"That's so," assented Jim Cummins.

"We'll get him to-night. We are strong enough to do it," and Jesse looked around at his band as if to read their thoughts.

"Yes, yes!" chorused the party. "Get him out to-night!"

"We'll have to get a horse for him."

"Yes. They got his horse, too."

"We can get one in town," said Cole.

"Then let's be off," and they pushed on toward town, going into the woods whenever they saw travelers coming toward them.

When night came on they were in a piece of woods about a mile outside the little town. They waited here till midnight and then prepared to go in and call on the jailer.

They went in two at a time, and in a very quiet sort of way, about three minutes ahead of each other and met again near an old church, a short distance from the jailer's house.

Jim Cummins was sent to call out the jailer.

He knocked on his door till a woman put her head out of the window of an upper story and asked:

"Who is it?"

"We have a prisoner here to be locked up," said Jim, in a very quiet tone of voice.

"Well, why don't you take him to the jail?" she asked.

"Is Mr. Ellis there?"

"Yes; he is there with a dozen men guarding the jail."

"Guarding the jail?"

"Yes."

"What are they guarding it for?"

"To keep the James Boys from releasing one of their men who is in there."

"Oh, yes; I heard they had one of 'em. When are they going to send him to St. Louis?"

"They ain't going to send him there at all. Court meets next week and the sheriff says he'll keep him here till he is tried."

"Well, we'll go and see him at the jail," and Jim returned to the others with the news that the jail was guarded by armed men.

"That stops any rescue to-night, then," Jesse remarked.

"Yes, of course," said Clell. "It won't do to go to storming the jail while a dozen Winchesters are there."

"Of course not," assented Frank.

"Poor Bob!" groaned Cole Younger. "If we don't get him out before court meets we can't do it at all."

"We must send one of our number into town to see how the guarding is done," said Jim. "We may be able to find a way."

"But they will know we have come to town for the purpose," Jesse said, "and that will cause 'em to double the guard. We must do it to-night or not at all."

"But how can we?"

"One of us must be delivered as a prisoner and the others hang around as a guard. That would disarm suspicion and we would have a chance to make the delivery."

"That's good sense," said Wood Hite. "Put the irons on me and turn me over as a horse thief."

"That's the game," said Jesse, and in another minute they were on their way to the jail with Hite as a prisoner.

The jailer and a guard of ten men were not a little surprised when they saw a party of six men ride up to the jail.

"Is the jailer here?" Jesse asked.

"Yes; I am the jailer," said Ellis, stepping forward.

"We have a prisoner here—a horse thief," said Jesse, "whom we want to have locked up. We did start to hang him once, but thought better of it. Will you lock him up?"

"I'll lock him up till morning, and then you must get an order from the sheriff to relieve me from any responsibility."

"Can't the sheriff be seen to-night?"

"No; and not till noon to-morrow. He is out of town."

"Then we'll stay here and help you guard the jail the rest of the night."

"All right. Would be glad to have you do so, as some of us are tired of the job."

"Well, let half go home, and we'll take their places till morning."

"That's a white man talking," said one of the guard. "I want to go home just a little of the worst sort."

The horse thief was locked up, and half the guard went home, leaving their Winchesters in the hands of the five bandits who were to take their places.

They were on guard about half an hour when Jesse walked round the jail with Cole and whispered to him:

"Tell the others to be near the men who are in our way, and at a signal from me to get the drop on them, put on the irons and then march 'em up-stairs to one of the rooms and lock 'em up. We can then get the keys and get Wood and Bob out."

"Yes. It can be easily done."

In due time Cole notified Jim and Clell, and Jesse posted Frank. At a signal each of the five citizens, one of whom was the jailer himself, found the black muzzle of a revolver staring him in the face.

"Hands up!" was the command, from five men at once.

"Who—who are you?" gasped the jailer.

"Jesse James and his many friends," was the reply of the bandit chief.

"Well, you have played it fine," said the jailer.

"Yes. We generally do."

"What do you want?"

"Our two friends who are locked up in there."

"You can have 'em."

In a few minutes Bob and Wood Hite were released.

When they returned to the jail office Bob shook hands with the other bandits, and then said:

"I am ready to go."

"Mr. Ellis, you will excuse me if I lock you all in and leave the keys on the outside as a matter of precaution?"

"Yes," said the jailer, who knew it was useless to make any protest.

They went down and locked the jailer and his friends in and then hurried to their horses.

In a few minutes they were on their way out of town and the jailer was yelling at the top of his voice, in hopes that someone would hear him and unlock the doors of the jail.

The bandits were ten miles away ere he succeeded in attracting the attention of a late traveler who happened to pass the jail on his way home.

Bob was overjoyed at getting out of jail.

"This is the third time I've been jugged," he said to Jesse. "and I've made up my mind it shall be the last. I'll die in my tracks rather than be locked up again."

"Nonsense" said Jesse.

"How so?"

"You can get out of jail, but never out of the grave."

"I don't think one ever wants to," he replied.

"I don't know about that," Jesse said. "But I do know that one never wants to get into it. I'll hold up my hands every time when one has the drop on me, and wait for another chance."

"So will I," put in Jim. "I don't want any bullets tearing through my innerds."

"I'd rather be dead than lie in jail a month," said Bob.

"Hanged if I would," replied Jesse. "I am not so tired of life as that. But you want to give Tom Greene's ranch a wide berth, Bob. May is mad and not a bit sorry for what she did."

"I am mad, too," Bob replied, "and I don't think I shall ever see her again unless we meet by accident."

"Well, you don't want to meet her by accident either," said Jim; "when a woman gets real mad it's time to let her alone."

They then decided, after a consultation, to go to Chalk Bluffs.

"The posses won't look for us there," said Jesse, "and we can have a chance to rest and find out what the detectives are doing."

"I haven't seen any detectives for weeks," said Frank James.

"Nor have I," put in Jim. "They seem to be giving us a rest of late."

"They are about and keeping an eye on us all the time," said Jesse. "That imitation of our signal night before last was the work of some shrewd detective, and it came near working our ruin, too."

"I hope your shot proved to be his ruin," said Clell Miller.

"So do I, but I am not sure I hit him at all."

"We can't be too careful about the signals," Frank remarked.

"We may have to change 'em," replied Jesse, "and a few days at the bluffs may give us a chance to do it."

It was a long ride to the Chalk Bluffs on the Missouri, but they rode hard and reached them about noon.

At the foot of the bluffs was a double log cabin, in which lived an old man and his wife. They called him Old Cain, and he never seemed to care whether he had any other name or not.

Back of the cabin was a crevice in the face of the bluff, which seemed to have been made during some extraordinary convulsion of nature. It ran up over one hundred feet, and was lost among the crags near the top of the precipice.

At the bottom it was wide enough for a horse to enter, and it was there the bandits dismounted when they succeeded in getting down to the base of the bluff.

Old Cain came forward and made his way into the crevice, and Jesse James was the first to follow him, leading Siroc.

The others went in one by one, each leading his horse, till the last one had disappeared.

Winding his way along through the crevice, Cain led the way into a big cavern, where had been gathered provisions and many comforts for man and beast.

It was one of the safe retreats of the James Boys, and it was never suspected up to the time of which we write.



"Any news, Cain?" Jesse asked of the old guide, when he had put Siroc in his usual place.

"Yes," replied the old man.

"What is it?"

"I have shot four men in four days."

"The deuce you have!"

"Yes."

"Did you kill 'em?"

"Well, that's what puzzles me," the old man replied. "I thought I did, but when I went to look for him where he fell he wasn't there."

"Then you didn't kill him. Where was he?"

"On top of the bluff—right overhead."

"And where were you?"

"Down in the back door of the cabin."

"Well, tell us about it."

"One day I looked up and saw a man sitting on a stone looking down at my cabin. I kept inside and watched him. He had a stick in his hand as though he had come on foot. He sat there four or five hours and I began to get tired of seeing him up there. I got out my Winchester, stood in the back door, took good aim at his breast and fired. He threw up both hands and rolled over off the rock. I went up to get his body and throw it into the river. But when I got there I could not find him. I hunted all round for him. He was gone and I came down wondering how many lives the man had. The next day I saw him up there again, and——"

"The same man?" Jesse asked.

"Yes; at least, he looked like the same one. I gazed up at him and he looked at me and then gazed off over the river. I couldn't stand that, so I got my Winchester and let him have another bullet. He threw up his hands and keeled over on the rocks again. 'I've got 'im this time, I reckon,' said I to myself, and I hurried off up there to get his carcass out of the way. I wish I may be shot for an egg-sucking dog if I could find a hair or hide of 'im."

"Is that so?"

"Yes; and I hunted round there for two hours, too. I came back down to the cabin and took my gun to pieces to see if anything was wrong with it. It was all right, as far as I could see, and I filled the chambers again and hung it up. The next day I looked up and saw him again sitting on the same rock."

"The same man?"

"Yes—leastways he looked like him. I got out my gun again and let him have it. Down he went, just as he did the day before, and I climbed up to the top again. But he wasn't there, and my hair kinder rose on end as I thought mebbe it wasn't a man at all. It was the first time I thought of it, and I didn't stay up there all day long looking for him. My wife was scared almost to death, and said as how it wasn't no man at all, but a ghost. I said I never did believe in ghosts, but this thing in open daylight which I couldn't kill kinder broke me up, and——"

"Yes, of course," put in Frank, who was as full of superstition as a hoodoo nigger.

"Yes; and I didn't know what to think. I couldn't believe I had missed him, because I never was good at missing things I shot at. Well, the next day there he was again and I just took a trembling all over me."

"Was it the same man?" Jim asked.

"He looked just like the others. I got down my bottle of Bourbon and took a good pull at it to stop the shakes and then went for my gun again. I held it against the side of the door, took good aim and pulled the trigger. The fellow threw up his hands and toppled over just as the others had done before, and I went up to look for him. I had the same luck. He wasn't there, and I'll be hanged if I ever shoot at him again. I'm done, once for all."

"When did you see him last?" Jesse James asked the old man.

"He was there yesterday and to-day, but I didn't shoot at him, and what's more, I am not going to, either."

"How long did he stay this morning?"

"Over two hours, I reckon."

"Will he come back again to-day?"

"I dunno. He skipped out when he saw you all coming."

"Well, let me try my hand on him when you see him again."

"Yes, of course. I don't shoot at him any more, that's certain," and the old man turned and left the cave.

"What do you think of that yarn, Jesse?" Jim Cummins asked.

"I don't know what to think," replied the bandit chief. "It's the strangest thing I ever heard of, if it is true."

"I reckon it's true," said Cole Younger, who had said nothing during the entire interview.

"Yes; I have no reason to doubt it," Jesse replied, "but I don't take any stock in ghost stories. I don't believe in 'em, and never did. Just now I am more concerned in a square meal and some sleep than in anything else."

"So am I," put in Clell. "I am hungry enough to eat anything now."

"Go out and see if any help is needed in getting up a dinner for

us," suggested Jesse, and Clell went out, going to the cabin of Old Cain and his wife.

While it stood at the foot of the bluff, the cabin was still some thirty or forty feet above the river, and one could leap from the rear door into a swift current that was very deep.

Clell found the old man drawing up a fish basket from the river when he entered the cabin from the bluff side, and from the weight of it, he judged it held a goodly number of fish.

"Can I give you any help, Mrs. Cain?" he asked of the old woman, as he entered.

"Yes," she replied. "Help my old man clean them fish."

"Got any bacon and coffee?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Well, we are hungry. Cook the bacon and make a pot of coffee first and then give us the fish."

She proceeded at once to act upon his suggestion, and in a little while the bandits had a meal of bread, bacon and coffee.

Then they spread the blankets, which were kept in the cabin for them, and lay down for the sleep they so much needed.

It was quite late in the evening ere they awoke, and they got out only to eat supper, after which they returned to their blankets and courted sleep again.

After so much sleep they were up early and out on the little plateau on which stood the double log cabin.

Jesse James and Frank kept their eyes on the top of the bluff, eager to get a glimpse of the mysterious personage the old man had told them about.

"He saw us yesterday," said Jesse, "and I will bet he won't show up there this morning."

"A ghost isn't afraid of anybody," Frank remarked, and Jesse laughed.

## CHAPTER VI.

### HOW JESSE JAMES WAS JUGGED.

The bandits were at breakfast when Old Cain rushed in and exclaimed:

"Now is your time, Jesse James!"

"What is it?" Jesse asked.

"The man on the bluff!"

Jesse sprang up and went to the door of the cabin and looked up at the top of the bluff.

There sat a man on a small boulder, apparently gazing out over the broad river.

"Is he the same fellow?" he asked of Old Cain.

"Yes; the same one."

The other bandits gazed up at him, too.

"Give me your Winchester," Jesse said to Cain.

The old man did so, and Jesse prepared to fire.

Crack!

Down tumbled the man.

"I'll bet a thousand dollars that I laid him out," Jesse said.

"I'll take that bet," said Frank.

"Done," Jesse replied.

"That was no man," Frank added.

"What was it?" Jim asked.

"A ghost, as sure as you live."

"Bah!" said Jesse. "you are as superstitious as a negro."

"I'll win your money."

"Come on, boys," Jesse said, leading the way up the path that led in a zigzag way up to the top of the bluff.

They soon reached the very boulder on which the mysterious man was seated when Jesse fired.

But they did not find any trace of a dead man about there.

Jesse was puzzled.

They then went down to the cabin again and held a consultation over the situation.

Jesse insisted that the mysterious man was a detective, and that he was not only a very daring one, but very dangerous.

"But why would a detective spend a week here in this out-of-the-way place playing target for Old Cain here?" Cole asked. "That's what puzzles me more than anything else."

"We don't know what his motive is," Jesse replied, "unless it is this: He may have found out that this is one of our hiding-places, and so set himself to watch for our return."

"Yes; that's good reasoning, but why should he let Cain see him and shoot at him?"

"Probably in hopes of frightening him away and thus leave him master of the situation, or he may have some other and better reason for it. Just chalk it down that he is a live man and that his presence here means no good to us."

"I agree with you there. But what are we to do?"

"Catch him in some way."

"It seems we can't hit him."



"Yes," and Jesse had a puzzled look in his face. "But I am not sure I didn't hit him this morning. We'll see if he returns, and then try him once more."

The bandits sat out-doors on stools and looked at the river some thirty feet below, and smoked and talked in low tones.

Several steamboats passed up and down during the afternoon, but the presence of seven men and a cabin on the banks of the river did not seem to excite any interest among those on board any of them.

"Great Scott!" cried Jim Cummins, a little before sunset, "there's your man again, Jesse!"

They all turned and gazed up at the top of the bluff.

There sat the same man again.

Jesse had Cain's Winchester by his side, lying on the ground.

He snatched it up and looked at the man, as if in some doubt as to whether he should shoot.

Finally he aimed and pulled the trigger.

Crack!

The Winchester has a report peculiar to itself.

The smoke blew away over the waters of the river and—the man sat there looking down at the bandits.

Jesse was amazed.

He fired again, and the man simply turned his head and looked around to his right.

Crack!

Crack!

Crack!

The man's hat was knocked from his head.

Crack!

He threw up both hands, clutched at the air, and sank down off the rock very much as a man hard hit would have done.

"That got him!" cried Bob, very much excited.

"One thousand to one hundred that you can't find him up there," said Frank.

"I'll take that bet," returned Jesse, as he started for the path that led up the hill.

Bob and Jim started to go with him.

"Never mind coming. Wait here," said Jesse, and they turned back to resume their seats with the others.

Jesse disappeared from sight in a winding pathway that led up to the top of the bluff, and Frank and the others waited and watched to see him reappear at the place where they had seen the man sitting on the small boulder.

Five, ten, fifteen, twenty minutes passed, and they did not see him.

"He is taking his time about it," said Bob.

"Yes," returned Cole. "He may be piping him. We must wait for a signal before following him, unless he is silent too long."

"Yes; that's my idea, too," remarked Frank. "But he won't see him up there. That was no flesh and blood man."

"I believe you are wrong, Frank," Cole said. "But it's a mystery to me how he can stand bullets as he does."

They waited and watched until the stars began to come out in the clear evening sky, and still they had seen nothing of Jesse.

Nor had they heard any signal from him.

"I don't like this at all," said Cole.

"Nor I," said the others.

"What do you say to a search, Cole?" Frank asked of Cole Younger.

"I don't think it will do any good in the dark," Cole replied.

"We ought to do something."

"Yes; but what shall it be? We know from experience how useless it is to hunt in the dark for anyone."

"He may have gone off on a trail," said Bob.

"Yes; and there are a thousand other things he may have done. I think we should guard the mouth of the cave all night and set a watch upon the top of the bluff."

"Excuse me from going up there," said Frank.

"And me, too," put in Bob.

"Well, we'll leave that out. But we'll guard the cave."

"Yes, of course."

"Two hours at a turn."

"Yes."

So it was arranged.

Cole was to guard it from ten to midnight, Jim till two, Wood Hinn till four, and Cole from four to six o'clock in the morning.

Old Cain and his wife remained in the cabin and did not have much to say.

Both were sound sleepers, and the old man admitted that he was hard to wake up after he once got to sleep.

When next Jesse James?

When he was next up to the top of the bluff, going along the path that he had traversed twice that day, he heard:

"Hold! Hands up!"

The man who called out with a revolver told him that it was "hands up," or death.

He held them up.

A man about his own size, with a sun-browned face and clear blue eye, came out from behind a boulder covering him with a six-shooter, and said:

"Keep 'em up or you know what to expect," and then he relieved the bandit chief of his brace of revolvers.

"Now hold out your hands."

"What for?"

"Hold 'em out!"

There was a ring of cold steel in the man's voice which sent a chill coursing down the spine of Jesse James.

He held out his hands.

In another moment he was handcuffed.

"Now go ahead of me and turn to the right or left as I order."

Jesse obeyed.

Once he thought he would give a signal, that the others might come to his rescue.

He was on the point of doing so when his captor said:

"If you make any noise I'll give you about ten inches of cold steel."

That settled it.

He knew he could get rescued from jail, but that death never relaxed its grip on anyone, and hence he obeyed the order rather than be killed.

The man marched him through a very rough part of the woods, and when it began to grow very dark he took from his pocket a ball of very strong silk cord, capable of sustaining a very heavy weight, and passed it round Jesse's neck.

"This is a silk cord," he said, "and is very strong. You may be tempted to make a dash in the darkness, and this will enable me to pull you back or cut your throat."

"I have no desire to do that," Jesse said. "I am your prisoner and am not going to give you any trouble at all. A man with the irons on him has no show."

"No; still I am not going to take any chances on you, Jesse James."

"You know me, I see."

"Yes. I ought to, for I have been around with you a good deal of late."

"You have?"

"Yes."

"Where was I last night?"

"Down under the bluff."

"Who are you?"

The man laughed, and said:

"I guess I am a shadow."

"A detective?"

"No, a ghost."

"Bah!"

"Don't believe it, eh?"

"No."

"Your brother Frank does."

"He is a fool."

The man chuckled.

"I should think those shots you fired ought to convince you."

"They did."

"They did, eh?"

"Yes."

"Well, what did they convince you of?"

"That you are a good hand at playing a game."

"You think it a game, eh?"

"I know it. I was not deceived, though I did not understand it. I don't yet."

The man chuckled, and said:

"Here's the road now. We have a long tramp. You must go into the woods whenever I order you. Rather than lose you I'd give you your quietus and then skip."

They tramped for some distance, and then Jesse asked:

"Have you no horse?"

"Not here. I am a good foot traveler."

"So am I, but not from choice."

"Well, a ten-mile tramp won't hurt you, I guess."

"Of course not."

They trudged along the road toward Kearney, and sometimes Jesse was tempted to make a dash for liberty when passing through a thick piece of timber.

But that silk cord round his neck deterred him from making the attempt. So he tramped on and on till he saw the lights of the village a mile away.

"Are you going to leave me at Kearney?" he asked.

"Yes, for a few days," the man replied.

They called up the jailer, who seemed to know the detective, as well as Jesse himself.

"Hello, Jesse!" he greeted. "I've been looking for you to come in for some time."



"You should have sent word to me," Jesse replied, and the jailer laughed, and said:

"I would, but didn't know where to find you. You never stay long in one place."

"No—I move about a good deal. I am very fond of exercise."

"Yes; so I heard. I am afraid we can't give you much exercise here."

"Just give me a good bed for the rest of the night and I won't complain."

"Very well. I can do that," and he conducted him to one of the strongest rooms in the jail.

## CHAPTER VII.

### HOW JESSE JAMES WAS RELEASED.

Cole Younger was the last of the bandits to go on guard at the mouth of the cave.

The other sentinels had reported that they had neither heard nor seen anything unusual while on duty.

They all arose and came out ere Cole's two hours were up.

Jesse James had not been heard during the night.

"We must search the bluff and woods after breakfast," said Frank.

"Yes," assented Cole, "and someone should go to Kearney and see if he has been taken there."

"Taken there?"

"Yes."

"Arrested, do you mean?"

"Yes. They would take him to the county jail if they captured him."

"That's so," put in Bob. "I'll go at once."

"You have a habit of breaking into jail yourself," said Cole, shaking his head.

They laughed, and Clell offered to go.

"Very well. Make your change and be off as soon as you can."

Clell proceeded to disguise himself, and, soon after breakfast, hurried off for the main road that led to Kearney.

"Now we'll go all over the bluff and the woods back of it," Cole said, and the others went with him.

Old Cain was instructed to keep up a strict watch for the mysterious man on the bluff.

"You needn't shoot at him unless you want to," Cole said to him as he started.

It was quite late in the afternoon when Clell was seen making his way down the narrow path, leading his horse.

Jim went to meet him.

"Any news?" he asked.

"Yes."

"What is it?"

"Jesse is in the Kearney jail."

"The deuce!"

"Yes."

"Did you make sure of it?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"I went in to identify him as the man who held me up last week."

"Well, well! Who caught him?"

"Detective Crabb."

"Crabb—Crabb—of New York?"

"Yes."

"Was he the man on the bluff?"

"Yes."

Jim went into the cave with him and sung out:

"Boys, Jesse is jugged!"

"Where?" demanded Cole, springing to his feet.

"In the jail at Kearney."

They crowded around Clell and heard the story in dumfounded amazement.

"So, you see, the ghost is flesh and blood after all," Cole said to Frank.

"I am not sure of that yet," Frank replied, shaking his head.

"Bah! What's the matter with you?"

Clell told all he had learned in the town. The citizens were greatly excited over the capture of the famous bandit, and there was some talk of lynching him to make sure that he did not get a chance to terrorize the State again.

"We must leave here at once, boys," Cole said. "That detective has spotted this place, and we may have a posse here at any moment. It's a bad place to get caught in."

"Yes; we must leave to-night," Frank said. "This is no place for us now."

They hurriedly prepared to leave.

Old Cain and his wife got up a supper for them and they led their horses out of the cave.

"Take good care of Siroc," Cole said to the old man. "He may be needed in a day or two."

Out on the road Jim Cummins said:

"Let's go to Kearney."

"What for?" Bob asked.

"To see what we can do to release him."

"Poor chance for that," Clell remarked.

"No harm in going."

"No; but there's a thousand strangers there now to see the jail that holds him."

"Did you see the man who caught him?"

"No; nor did I see anyone who did except the jailer."

"Well, we may have a chance. We'll go and see, anyhow." And so they rode off in the direction of Kearney.

Every one had been in Kearney often and was quite well known there, hence they had to make up disguises.

They were good at that, however, and when they rode into Kearney and put up at the hotel in the place no one had any suspicion as to their identity.

As Clell had said, the town was full of strangers who had come in on hearing that Jesse James was captured.

So great was the curiosity of the people that hundreds hung round the jail all day, gazing at the iron-barred windows of his cell.

Jim Cummins and Cole Younger spent the greater part of the day in the crowd round the jail, picking up points.

They found the people more interested in getting a chance to see the famous bandit than bringing him to justice.

"I have seen him," said Cole to a party of a dozen men. "He held me up once and took my wallet and watch from me."

"Did he seem rough?"

"Not very. But he soon made me believe that my life depended on giving up all the valuables I had with me."

"You gave 'em up, of course?"

"You can gamble on it that I did, and I wasn't slow about it, either."

"He took my horse from me last year," said Jim, who seemed to be an honest old farmer, "and left me to walk home, a distance of about six miles."

"Was he alone?" one asked.

"No. There were three of 'em."

"How do you know he was one of 'em?"

"I heard one of 'em call him 'Jesse,' and he called another 'Jim.' It was my best horse, too. Gosh but I'd like to hold to one end of a rope with the other end around his neck!"

"So would I," said another.

"Well, I wouldn't," said a third.

"Why not?"

"He has too many friends. I'd be afraid my house and barn might go up in smoke some night."

"That's me, too," put in a fourth.

"Well, I'd like to help hang the whole gang," remarked Jim. "They have been doing this thing long enough, I think."

"So do I. He ought to be lynched," and the number who agreed on that point convinced the bandit that one or two bold spirits could easily organize a lynching party in that crowd.

Cole at last made up his mind to act promptly.

He told the others his game, and they agreed to stand by him.

He and the other five were to go to the sheriff and ask to be permitted to see Jesse James and ascertain if he were the one who had robbed them on divers occasions.

The sheriff gave him an order on the jailer to let him and the five others see the prisoner for the purpose of identifying him.

The jailer took them in, of course, and as soon as they were safe inside the jail they bound and gagged him. Then they took the keys and entered Jesse's cell and aided him in disguising himself.

That done, they came down and passed out through the crowd unquestioned.

In a very few minutes they were riding leisurely out of town, and it was some four or five hours ere the jailer was relieved of his uncomfortable position.

A howl of rage went up from the crowd when they heard how the bandit chief had slipped from out of their grasp.

They abused the jailer, denounced the sheriff and called for their resignation of the positions they held.

"It was well done, boys," Jesse said, as he rode away with his bandits, "and in broad daylight, too."

"Yes," added Clell, "and at least two hundred people were standing round the jail, too."

"Yes; it was well played. It will make a big sensation. If any of us are caught hereafter there may be a lynching. They won't trust the jails any more."

"That's what I think," assented Jim. "A capture will mean death hereafter."



"I've had enough of it myself," remarked Bob.

"Yes; till you get stuck on another girl," said Clell.

"That's right, Clell," Bob returned, "keep it up, and by and by we'll love each other to death," and the others laughed.

Bob was getting tired of the nagging to which he had been subjected.

"Better drop that thing, boys," said Jesse. "We can't afford to quarrel among ourselves."

"That's what I say," added Jim. "We are going to have a hot time of it."

"So we are," Jesse said. "I think we had better leave the county for a while."

"Yes," returned Frank, "for a month, at least."

"We have nearly \$8,000 each," Clell remarked. "Why not go to St. Jo, Kansas City or St. Louis and have a month of rest?"

"That's a good idea. Jim Younger and the others can be found and notified."

"Yes. We shall all go together," Jesse suggested.

"Of course."

"Where shall we go?"

"St. Jo," said Bob.

"That is not lively enough," said Clell.

"St. Louis," suggested Jim Cummins.

"Kansas City," put in Wood Hite.

"That suits me!"

"And me!"

"And me, too!"

"Kansas City, then," said Jesse.

"All right," chorused the others.

"There'll be nine of us when the other two come in," said Cole.

"Yes; and we must all keep together so as to be able to aid each other in case of danger. We must buy a horse and stable and keep it ourselves."

"That's so. Polly Wiggins would run it for us—a regular boarding house," and as Cole made the suggestion the others indorsed it.

"She won't have to hire any servants," Cole said. "Her two girls will help her, and they are just itching to move to town."

"We'll go to Holland's and stay there," said Jesse, "till we can make the arrangements. We need such a place as that in town, and now is the time to get it."

"Holland's" was another boat-landing, some twenty miles above Blake's Run, where an old hotel was kept by a man who had served under Quantrell.

They had often found shelter with him and had never been imposed upon by him or anyone in his employ.

They reached Holland's about dusk and were made welcome by the landlord.

The Widow Wiggins and her two daughters lived on a farm two miles from Holland's.

She was the widow of one of Quantrell's sergeants, and was a staunch friend of the James Boys. Once, when hard pressed by the sheriff's posse, she had saved Jesse James's life.

That night Jesse and Clell went to see her.

It was a very dark night, and they had to go slow—on foot.

The widow and her two girls were very glad to see them.

Amanda and Sallie were two buxom girls who were able to take care of themselves, and had an independent way about them that made some people think them queer.

"Aunt Polly," said Jesse to the widow, "how would you like to live in Kansas City?"

"I would like it if we could make a living there," she replied. "Why do you ask me that, Jesse?"

"Because I want somebody to run a boarding-house there, where we can come and go at any time without running any risks."

"Law, ma, that would just suit us!" exclaimed Amanda, the elder of the two girls.

"Yes; so it would," chimed in Sallie.

"I'll buy the house in your name," Jesse said, "and let you buy the furniture and get it going as soon as you can."

"Oh, my!" cried the girls. "That would be just too nice for anything!"

"I'll do it," said the widow.

"Very well. I'll go up and buy a place and then take you to it, give you the keys and money enough to furnish it. Be ready to go up in two or three days."

He and Clell then came away, and on the following day Jesse had the others chip in and put up money enough to buy such a place as they needed.

When the boat came along he went on board and took passage for Kansas City.

Three days later he returned and told the widow that he had bought a big frame house, with yard in front and rear, and a good stake, the title to which was in her name.

She and her two girls went up the next day and began furnishing it with funds given her by Jesse. Her farm was put up for sale and the landlord at Holland's was left in charge of it.

In the meantime the bandits remained in seclusion at the old hotel.

Nobody suspected who they were, and they were careful not to do or say anything to attract attention.

The capture and release of Jesse James, following so close on each other, seemed to arouse half the State, and posses were out in a dozen counties at the same time.

One posse came to Holland's and spent the night there.

Jim Cummins played poker with the leader and won every cent he had.

"You are in hard luck," said Jim, as he raked in his last dollar.

"Yes. I haven't a cent left," was the reply.

"Well, promise me you won't play another game for money as long as you live and I will return you every cent you have lost."

"Do you mean it?"

"Yes."

"I promise, then."

"On your honor as a man?"

"Yes; on my honor as a man."

"Here's your money. Don't forget your promise, for you are a poor player and will lose every time you play."

The man pocketed the money and went out to have a smoke.

Jim went out with him, and as they smoked they talked of the arrest and escape of Jesse James.

"I live down in Arkansaw," said Jim, as he puffed away at his cigar, "and haven't anything to say about the way you do things in Missouri. But if we ever catch him down our way we'll string him up to a tree, riddle him with bullets and then leave him for the buzzards to peck at."

"That's the way he ought to be served up here," said the man, "and if we get him again I shouldn't wonder if he met just such a fate."

Jim was half suspicious that the man he was talking to was Crabb, and he wanted Jesse to see him and decide as to the correctness of his suspicions.

"If he is I'll kill him," said Jesse.

They returned to the hotel, and Jim soon told Jesse of his suspicions.

He went round to where he was talking and listened to him for several minutes. He was deeply interested, for the man was a mystery to him.

But he finally strolled away and Jim followed him.

"No," he said; "he is not Crabb."

"Better be sure. Crabb has shown that he can play a good game. This man is claiming that he is the brother of the man you shot at Blake's."

"Is that so?"

"Yes; and says he intends to shoot Jesse James on sight."

"Then you can bet he is not Crabb."

"Why?"

"He would never have talked in a way to draw attention to himself. Besides, he would never think of going out with a posse. Bob has cleaned out two more of those fellows at poker."

"Has he?"

"Yes; and Wood Hite and Clell are just polishing up two more," and a smile played over the bronzed face of the bandit chief.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### JESSE JAMES HELD UP—THE SHARP JEW.

During the night the posse spent at Holland's more than half of them lost every cent of money they had with them, and the James Boys won it, at poker.

But they never dreamed that the winners were the men they were in quest of. They seemed to take their hard luck as one of the things that must come to every man at some period of his life.

The next day they left, the deputy sheriff in charge of them paying the bills of those who had been cleaned out.

"Now, boys," Jesse said, "we must be off, too, or that fellow Crabb will be down on us again."

"Where shall we go?" Cole asked.

"We must keep moving till Aunt Polly is ready for us, which won't be for several days yet."

"Why not stay here?"

"Because we may be spotted."

"Why not go to the cave back of Tom Greene's place?"

"No—that would never do."

"No," and Bob shook his head.

They roared, and Bob looked mad.

"How about the Big Blue?"

Jesse shook his head.

"Nothing to live on there," he remarked.

"Cross the river and hold up a stage," suggested Clell.



"That would be better," replied Jesse.

"I don't know," said Cole, "we have got the people aroused enough now, it seems to me."

"Oh, they'll never forgive us, so we may as well keep on. A hold-up on the other side of the river would send all the posses back home, for they would see that we had left the country," and Jesse seemed to like the idea very much.

"We had better divide up into twos and threes and meet at Black's Corners over on the other side."

"Black's Corners?" said Clell. "I know where it is. There's a stage passes there every day, and it's a good line, too."

"Yes," replied Jesse, "and we have never held one up on that line."

"I heard that the sheriff of that county had boasted that we had never dared to do any business in his jurisdiction," said Jim.

"Yes; I saw that in the papers," Jesse remarked. "I'd like to find out where he lives and pay him a visit."

"It would be a good joke," and Cole looked as though he thought it would be funny to hold that sheriff up.

It was decided that Jesse, Jim and Cole should go together, Clell and Bob in another pair, and Frank and Wood in another, and they were to meet at Black's Corners at noon the next day.

Frank and Wood left at once, going down the river to a ferry run by an old soldier named Henderson.

Clell and Bob were to cross at the same place later in the day, and Jesse was to lead off up the river to another ferry.

Jesse and his two companions took quite an unfrequented road for the ferry, as they did not care to run up against any posse.

They soon left the lane and got into the ferry road, which was still some miles away.

They met an old negro and asked him how far it was to the river.

"Seben miles, sah."

"Can we get across there?"

"Yes, sah."

"We are looking for the sheriff and his men. Have you seen them on this road to-day?"

"No, sah."

They gave the old man a dollar and rode on.

The old ducky was almost paralyzed at receiving so much money, and went on up the road with a broad, happy grin on his face.

The bandits had not gone a mile farther ere they saw quite a body of horsemen ahead of them. To ride into the woods and wait was promptly done, and a dozen armed men on horseback rode by, little dreaming how near they were to the great bandit whom they were in search of.

When they had disappeared Jesse rode out of the woods and continued on his way to the ferry, which they soon reached.

But the ferry-boat was on the other side of the river, and they had to wait there till it came back over to them.

"In case of a hot pursuit we'd have to fight or we'd have to plunge in and swim," said Jesse.

"That would never do," replied Jim.

"What would never do?"

"Swim a river with pursuers behind you. They could shoot you and you would have no show at all."

"Of course not. I did not mean to swim with an enemy in sight."

"I once swam across the Mississippi," Jim said, "and the current carried me two miles below my starting-point."

"That was a long swim."

"Yes; but it was a rope behind me."

Jesse laughed.

"It was swim or swing, eh?"

"Yes; and I knew I was a good one in the water."

"The boat is coming," Cole said, as he saw the wheezy little craft coming across.

"Yes; and I shall be glad enough when we are on the other side," Jesse remarked.

"So will I."

"Yes; and we had better get away from the river as fast as we can."

On reaching the other side Jesse tipped the old fellow liberally, and mounted his horse.

"How far is it to Morrisville?" he asked.

"Twenty-two miles," the ferryman replied.

"Can we reach there before noon?"

"I reckon you can if you ride fast."

They rode off over the hill.

"If anybody asks him which way we have gone he will be apt to tell them that we went on to Morrisville," Jesse said to Cole.

"Yes; I don't think he suspected us at all," remarked Jim.

"I hope the others will do as well."

"So do I."

"You have been to Black's Corners?" Jesse asked of Jim.

"Yes."

"You know the way, then?"

"Yes."

"Then we can't miss it. I've never been there from this direction."

"No. I know the way."

About an hour before noon they met the others, and then rode up to the store and post-office.

Only two or three customers were there, and no one seemed to take any notice of the black horse.

They made some trifling purchases and then rode away, going up the main road toward Morrisville to meet the stage.

"I don't see any convenient place about here to hold up a stage," said Jim.

"No. We must ride faster and get into a good piece of timber before the stage comes," remarked Jesse.

"Yes," assented Cole. "When I was along here during the war I remember a heavy piece of woods beyond here, but how far I can't recollect."

"Ride faster then," and they did.

In a little while they came to the woods Cole spoke of, and he remembered them.

"This is the place. We hid in these woods once when Curtis was chasing us."

"We'll hide in them again," said Jesse, as he led the way into the bushes. "This is as good a place as we could wish for," and the others followed him.

The stage soon hove in sight, and the bandits adjusted their black masks and stood ready to dash into the road and order a halt.

Jesse was the first to dash out.

He knew his mask and superb black horse would paralyze the driver.

The others followed close behind him.

"Halt!" he cried, in a ringing tone of voice, leveling his revolver at the head of the driver.

"Whoa! Whoa! My God!" and the driver's eyes bulged as if they would pop out of their sockets.

"What is it?" asked someone inside.

"Don't shoot, sir!" the driver said.

"Hold your horses well in hand, then," Jesse said.

"Yes, yes, I'll do my best, sir."

"My God! it's Jesse James!" exclaimed a voice inside the stage.

"Eh! Eh! No! It can't be!" and a bald-headed man peeped out of the window of the door.

"All of you get out and hold up your hands!" sang out Jesse James.

The first man to get out was a young Jew with a satchel in his hand.

He made a break for the woods.

Crack!

Crack!

"Ough! ouf! ow! oh! oh!" yelled and groaned the reckless young son of Israel, as he dropped his satchel, rolled on the ground and rubbed the calf of his leg.

"Mine Gott! Mine Gott in himmel! I'm kilt alretty!" and he rubbed his leg and groaned.

"Serves you right," said Jim, as he went up to him and searched him and took away his satchel. "When you are held up again and you don't obey orders you'll drop dead."

"Go through 'em, Bob," said Jesse, "and if any man resists he'll be shot."

Bob made a search of the male passengers, and Wood Hite examined the stage to see if any valuables had been dropped in there.

He got rings, watches, diamond pins and fat wallets.

"Now, ladies, your money and valuables, please," said Bob, as he turned to the two women.

They made no outcry, but handed over their jewelry and purses.

"Thanks," Bob said, as he received them.

"You may go now," said Jesse, as he remounted and rode away, followed by the others.

The moment they were out of sight the young Jew laughed and waved his open palms on a level with his ears.

"I ish got der pullets in der legs unt der timonts in der leafs, py shimminy!" and he raked the dead leaves away and scooped up a handful of diamonds he had placed there from his satchel while on the ground groaning with a wounded leg.

"It takes a Jew to beat the robbers," said the driver, when he saw the game the young Jew had played to save the property of his employer.

"Id vas der peezness hedt vot I vas hadt," said the shrewd young drummer as he hobbled back to his seat in the stage.

"But you are wounded—you are bleeding awfully!" said one of the ladies.

"I vas lose der blood unt save dot timonts," he replied.

"The Jews will die for money any day," remarked the driver.

"Petter die ven you haf notings," said the young son of Isaac with a determined shake of the head.

The driver made haste to reach Black's Corners and give the young drummer in charge of a physician.



In an hour's time they had reached there, and the news went out that the James Boys were on the east side of the Missouri and doing business in their old way.

## CHAPTER IX.

### HOW JESSE JAMES WAS PUZZLED.

On leaving the stage the bandits rode fast up the main road till they struck a cross road which led toward the river again.

Turning into that they hurried forward and did not stop till they had placed a round dozen miles between themselves and the scene of the hold-up.

Jim Cummins had held on to the satchel of the young Jew during the ride.

"I think we had better see what is in this thing," he said.

"Yes; I forgot all about that," Jesse replied. "Let's go into the bushes here and have a division."

They went into the woods a safe distance from the road and dismounted. Each man drew out from his pockets the proceeds of the stage robbery and laid them on the ground.

The satchel contained four gold watches and some rings, and a memoranda of over \$6,000 worth of diamonds which were to be used as samples by the young drummer.

"But where are they?" Jesse asked.

"That's what I'd like to know," replied Jim, as he again examined the satchel.

"It can't be that he didn't have 'em," Jesse said. "Did you search his clothes, Jim?"

"Yes."

"Search 'em good?"

"Yes."

"Feel his back and waist for a belt?"

"Yes."

"Well, it's strange."

"Yes. I don't understand it. He must have had 'em, or he would not have risked his life in the way he did."

"Those sheenies are slick fellows," Bob remarked. "I had one get away with me once and I never forgave him for it."

"How did he do it?"

"He wrenched the diamond from a \$500 pin and pressed it in an apple. I found the apple in his pocket and threw it on the ground. I read about how he chuckled over it in a Kansas City hotel a week later, and kicked myself."

"Wasn't he just blowing?" Clell asked.

"No. I remembered seeing the hole in the apple. It was true. He just beat me out of that diamond."

"Well, that young chap has beaten the gang of us in some way," said Jim Cummins, "and I am going to see if we ever hear of it again."

"Yes; he has beaten us," returned Clell, "but he has a bullet in his calf I reckon that will worry him some."

"So he has; but that won't do us any good."

"Only a little satisfaction—that's all."

"Yes, that's all. Now mount and come on. We want to get away from here as soon as we can."

"Which way now?" Jim asked, as they reached the big road.

"Up the river," Jesse replied.

They moved on, going at a leisurely pace, the starlight soon enabling them to see the road quite plainly.

Jesse whispered to Cole after they had gone some miles:

"I am going to drop into the bushes and wait to see if anyone is following us. Keep right on to the end of the trip if you don't see me."

"Shall I tell the others?"

"Yes; but in whispers."

Jesse suddenly turned into the bushes and halted close by the roadside, and the others rode on.

Cole soon told Frank and the others what Jesse was doing, and they were satisfied that he would make an end of Crabb if he saw him.

The bandit chief had not been in the bushes three minutes ere he saw a dark object go past him, just in the edge of the bushes, and so close that Siroc held up his head in alarm.

Just what it was he could not make out, but that it was a human being he, at first, had some doubts.

Then he began to think that after all it might have been the detective, and he regretted that he did not fire at it.

"If it was a man he was shadowing us," he reasoned to himself. "If it was an animal it is not a hanging crime to kill it. I'll try it over again," and he dashed out into the road and urged Siroc forward at full speed.

He had to ride a mile ere he overtook them.

"I'll try it over again," he whispered to Cole, and after going

another mile or so he again dropped out and took up a position at the edge of the timber.

There he sat, silent and erect in the saddle, pistol in hand, ready for any emergency.

That quick, silent moving shadow glided past again and he fired. Crack!

It darted into the bushes, and he emerged into the road.

"Halt! Hands up!"

The command came from the bushes.

He laid himself flat on Siroc's back, and the well-trained animal sprang away like a rocket.

Crack!

Crack!

Two bullets whistled uncomfortably close to him.

Crack!

Crack!

He sent back two in return, to which no answer was made.

In another moment Siroc had taken him out of range.

He dashed after the others and overtook them nearly two miles from where he left them.

"Anybody hurt?" Jim asked.

"I don't know. I am not."

"Who was it?"

"Crabb."

"How do you know?"

"I know his style."

"Did you see him?"

"Yes; for a moment."

"Missed him?"

"I couldn't see him when I fired."

"Is he following us?"

"Yes; and on foot."

"The deuce!"

"Yes."

"Well, we can shake him easily."

"How?"

"By hard riding."

"Yes; possibly."

"Going to try him again?"

"Not to-night."

"What, then?"

"We'll make a run for ten miles."

"Very well—right up the road?"

"Yes."

They dashed off up the road at full speed and kept it up for half an hour. The road was good in that section, and it ran through some fine farms.

But they did not halt or let up a single moment till more than ten miles had been passed.

Then they halted in the edge of a wood and waited for him to come up. If he appeared they were all to open fire on him and keep it up till he went down.

But hours passed and still no one came, and at last the gray streaks of coming dawn appeared in the eastern horizon.

"You may have settled him last night," Cummins said.

"Yes, possibly; but I am not satisfied with any such uncertainty as that. Jim, I want you to stay with me a day or two and let the others go on to Kansas City."

"I'll do it, Jesse."

"Of course. You are not afraid of anything."

"Where will you go?"

"Wait here and elsewhere for that fellow."

"Shall we go on now?" Cole asked.

"Yes."

They mounted and rode away.

Jesse and Jim remained behind in the woods.

And they kept quiet—not even exchanging whispers for three hours.

During that time some few people passed, but they did not come from the direction to create any suspicion.

At last Jesse broke silence.

"We have lost him for this trip, I fear."

"Yes. We may as well go on."

## CHAPTER X.

### DETECTIVE CRABB.

Detective Crabb, of New York, was a medium-sized man, active, wiry, and of wonderful endurance as regards hunger, thirst, heat, cold or fatigue.

When he was asked to undertake the capture of Jesse James, he said:

"On one condition only."



"Name it."

"The receipt of the jailer when I deliver Jesse James's body to him, dead or alive, shall be my order for the payment of the rewards offered."

"Why so?"

"Because if he escapes again after that it is no fault of mine. I will agree to try to gather evidence against him. I'll capture or kill him—either will break up his band."

They agreed to his terms.

He appeared in Missouri and began his work without letting anybody but a very few discreet officials know it.

Jesse James did not know of him until he had been captured by him and delivered to the county jail.

As the reader knows, he was promptly rescued by his band and was soon on the road again.

Crabb was engaged to do his work over again.

"All right," he said. "It's a good business for me, and I am in it to make all I can out of it. I don't care how often you let him get away," and he went to work again.

Of course Jesse James did not know what sort of a contract the detective had made.

But he had learned to look upon him as the most dangerous man he had ever met, and so was on his guard to down him the first chance he got.

Crabb did not seek to mingle with the bandits.

He kept out of view most of the time and yet near enough to see and hear a good deal that was done or said by them.

Jesse James had the finest horse in the world, and he knew how utterly useless it was to pit another horse against him. It would be wearing out horseflesh for nothing, so he did not go about on horseback, but on foot.

That was why the James Boys could not tumble to the fact that a dangerous detective was after them.

When they were at Holland's he was there, too, and hence when they crossed the river he passed over on the next boat.

He saw the stage robbery, but could do nothing to prevent it, for he did not know they were going to do that.

They were too many for him to attack, and he did not intend to do anything rash.

That was not his game.

When they entered the woods to rest and wait for night he was able to get up quite close to them and hear some of their talk.

When Jim and Wood went out foraging he entertained the idea of capturing the balance of five as they slept.

But he gave it up after weighing the chances in his mind as entirely too dangerous.

As the bandits rode away under the stars the detective followed them on foot.

He knew that a man could run a horse to death easily in a day—that the animal had greater speed in a spurt, but that he couldn't stay there.

Taking off his shoes and putting on a pair of moccasins he sped along the road and kept the bandits within sight or hearing.

But he did not see or hear Jesse James when he slipped into the woods, and waited to see if he was being pursued.

He ran by on that side of the road and very close to the head of the black horse without knowing it, and even Jesse did not know what it was that had passed.

A few minutes later he heard the black horse coming up behind him, and he darted into the woods to let him pass.

He could not recognize Siroc in the dark, so he waited till he could no longer hear him, and then resumed the chase.

Again Jesse was in waiting, and as he was flying along the road in his moccasins, he was shot at. The bullet whizzed within an inch of his nose.

Quick as a flash he darted into the bushes and drew his weapon.

A man on a horse came out of the bushes but a few feet behind him, and he held him up.

The horseman fired, and he fired.

But neither were hurt, and the horseman got away.

"He played that game well," the detective said to himself, "and came near getting me. They'll all wait for me the next time and riddle me with bullets. The pitcher that goes to the well once too often gets broken. I am no pitcher," and he sat down on the ground, took off his moccasins, put them in his pocket and then put on his shoes.

Once more out of the woods he trudged along the road till he thought he had gone far enough for safety. Then he re-entered the woods and pushed his way forward, keeping far enough away from the road to avoid an ambush.

By that means he got ahead of the bandits and pushed on again.

"They'll seek to cross the river again at the nearest ferry," he said, as he pushed rapidly forward. "I'll go on there and wait for them. I may get another chance at him. Who knows?"

He reached the river, and the ferryman wanted him to wait a while till some other passenger came.

"No. I want to go over now," he said.

"It will cost you a dollar if you don't wait," said the ferryman.

"Here's your dollar," and he produced a bill and gave it to him.

The ferryman was a big, burly fellow.

He took the dollar, put it in his pocket, and said:

"We'll run over as soon as I run up to the house and back," and he walked off toward his little family hut, some two hundred yards up on the hill.

"Well, he has gall enough," said Crabb, as he gazed at the big fellow.

Five, ten, twenty minutes passed, and still no ferryman showed up.

Crabb was in a rage.

"I've a mind to cross over and leave the boat on the other side," he muttered.

Just then he saw the James Boys coming over the hill.

The black horse was in the lead.

He hastily made a change in his make-up, and said:

"I'll take 'em over myself."

Jesse James rode boldly on board and dismounted.

The others did so, too.

"Put us over in a hurry, ferryman," the bandit chief said.

"Yes, sir," and he cut loose and started for the middle of the stream.

"Hyer—hyer!" yelled the big ferryman, as he came running down the hill at the top of his speed. "Come back—come back—or I'll kill every cursed son of you!"

"Who is he?" Jesse asked of Crabb.

"He's my boss, sir," Crabb replied.

"What's the matter with him?"

"He wasn't there to take your toll and he's mad about it."

"And is that what he is making such a row about?"

"Yes, sir. Look out! He's going to shoot!"

Bang!

The fellow had a double-barreled shotgun, which he kept in a hollow tree near the ferry landing to shoot ducks with.

A shower of duck shot rattled all over the ferryboat, hit three of the bandits and nearly all of the horses.

The maddened animals reared and plunged, and it took four of the bandits to keep them from going overboard.

Jesse James drew his revolver, took a quick aim and fired.

The brutal ferryman dropped his gun and staggered away.

"Maybe you won't do that any more," Jesse remarked, as he put his weapon away.

"He is a bad man, sir," Crabb remarked.

"Yes; I should say he was."

"What do you work for such a man for?"

"Thirty dollars a month, sir," he replied.

"I mean, why do you live with such a brute?"

"For the thirty dollars a month, and now even that is gone."

"How so?"

"Oh, I'll be arrested and sent to jail for that shot you gave him, sir."

"But you didn't do it."

"No; but he'll swear I did, and if you don't come to court and own up, it'll go hard with me."

"Maybe he'll die," suggested Clell.

"Then they'll hang me, sir," and he pretended to be greatly frightened.

"What will you do, then?"

"Run away, sir."

"Got any money?" Jesse asked.

"No, sir!"

"Does he owe you any money?"

"Yes, sir, for two months."

"Well, here's some," and Jesse gave him some bills as he spoke. "You will need it if you want to get away."

He took the bills and stowed them away in his pocket.

By this time the ferryboat had reached the west bank of the river, and Clell was leading his horse up from the boat, when Crabb said:

"Your horse is hurt, sir."

"Where?"

"There, sir," and he pointed to a spot where a duck shot had entered the horse's hide.

"Yes, that's so," said Clell, "but it doesn't amount to much," and he sprang into the saddle.

As Jesse rode up on the bank the bogus ferryman said to him:

"I've got to leave, sir. Please let me go along with you till I am safely out of reach of the officers?"

"Why, how can you?" Jesse asked. "You have no horse."

"I don't need a horse, sir."

"Why not?"

"I can travel sixty miles a day on foot, and that's the best any horse can do."

"The deuce you can!"



"Yes, sir."

"I don't believe it!" said Jim.

"Not I!" added Bob.

"But I can, sir!" he protested.

"Bah!"

"Try me and see."

"I'll tell you what I'll do," Jesse said. "We will tie you and say you are one of the James Boys whom we are taking to jail. Then no one will bother you, and when you are far enough away we'll release you and let you go."

"You'll tie me so I can unloose myself if I want to, won't you?"

"Why?"

"So I can defend myself if attacked."

"Yes, of course."

"Tie him, Jim," Jesse said, and Jim tied him with a dirty handkerchief and then remounted.

"Now, let's see how you can travel," Jesse said to him, and he started off.

Ere he had gone a mile Jesse said to Jim:

"I reckon he can do as he said. I never saw anything like it."

"Wait till he has gone ten miles," Jim replied, "and you'll find out differently."

Some two miles further on they stopped at a farm-house to get breakfast.

The farmer was overjoyed at hearing that one of the James Boys had been captured.

"You didn't get Jesse, did you?" he asked.

"No; but we got his horse."

"How did you get 'im?"

"Got between, and made it so hot for him he had to take to his heels to save himself."

"Thank God for that!" exclaimed the farmer. "That horse has saved Jesse James fifty times at least. Maybe they'll get him now. Lord, but he is a fine one!" and he walked all round the black horse, admiring his many points.

"Yes; the sheriffs will have a chance now," said Jesse.

The farmer would not charge a cent for their breakfast.

He was only too glad to help them along, and gave vent to some very sanguinary expressions in regard to the prisoner.

Crabb smiled, but didn't make any reply.

He was playing a deep game and had to keep up the character he had assumed.

They made good time for the next four hours, and then came to a little village of about a thousand people.

"Keep by his side, Jim," said Jesse, as they rode up to the hotel.

"Yes, I will."

The news spread through the village that a posse had come in with one of the James Boys a prisoner.

The whole village, men, women and children, white and black, turned out to see him.

They gazed at him as at a wild beast who was worse than a tiger in ferocity, and kept at a respectful distance from him.

Jim kept by his side to see that he did not betray them by word or act.

"Why not put him in jail till morning?" suggested a prominent citizen.

"The jail is not a safe place," Jim replied.

"Why, it's a new one."

"Yes; but Jesse James and his band could get him out easily enough if we should put him in there. We intend to keep him under our own eyes, and if he gets away we'll know who is to blame."

They could not gainsay that, and so they were left to do as they wished with him.

Jesse ordered two extra beds put in one big room, and the prisoner and his guard occupied it.

"What are you so careful about me for?" the prisoner asked in an innocent sort of way.

"Just to keep up the fun," Jim replied.

"Where is the fun?"

"To see how the people are fooled."

"Is that funny?"

"Yes—a practical joke."

"I don't see anybody laughing at it."

"No. The laugh will come in when the truth gets out."

"When will it get out?"

"When we get to Kansas City."

"What will you do with me then?"

"Turn you loose and let you go. We'll give you some money so you can go on to California if you want to."

"Lord! that's just where I want to go!"

"Very good. We'll send you."

They rose early the next day, and the whole village turned out to see them off.

Jesse paid the bill for the entire party and the landlord gave him a receipt or voucher for the amount.

When some miles out of the village they met another posse, headed by the sheriff of the county.

They were about twenty in number, and Jesse did not like the meeting at all, as there were men in that party who knew him and Frank, as well as one or two others of the band.

But he hoped his disguise would enable him to escape even suspicion.

The sheriff stopped them and asked:

"Who is the prisoner?"

"One of the James Boys," Jesse replied.

"Indeed! Which one?" and he looked the prisoner over from head to foot.

"That is what I can't find out. He won't answer any questions."

"How do you know he is one of the James Boys' band, then?"

"We surprised them, captured Jesse James's horse and got this fellow. If he is not one of the band he was in very bad company and tried very hard to get away."

"That is Jesse's horse, eh?"

"Yes. That is Siroc."

The entire party crowded round the black horse and gazed at him.

"Yes," said one, "that's Siroc. I know him well. He is the finest horse in the world."

"Yes, that's Siroc," put in another.

"What are you going to do with him?" one asked him.

"I am going to turn him over to the State if I am not allowed to keep him myself."

Jim kept alongside the prisoner all the time, and when the sheriff said he wanted to talk with him, Jesse said he could do so if he all could hear.

"Do you object to my doing so privately?" the sheriff asked.

"Yes."

"Why, if I may ask?"

"Because he is my prisoner—not yours—and I have the right to know what is said to him."

"But I am sheriff of this county."

"Well, what if you are? That does not give you control over me or mine."

"No; but this man is——"

"My prisoner—not yours," said Jesse, very sternly. "If you interfere with him or me you will rue it."

"Well, I'll take the chances," and he dismounted and went up to the prisoner.

"If you put your hand on him you're a dead man!" said Jim, drawing a revolver.

The sheriff saw death in the bandit's eyes and stopped.

"My men will kill you if you kill me," he replied.

"Then there'll be two dead men," Jim dryly returned.

"Mr. Sheriff, what do you mean by such conduct?" Jesse asked

"I mean that I have doubts as to the truth of your story," replied the bold sheriff.

"Oh, you have, eh?"

"Yes."

"And you want to consult the prisoner about it?"

"No. I want to ask him some questions."

"Ask as many as you please, but if put your hands on him I'll kill you!" and Jesse rode up close to him, revolver in hand.

"You are wrong, sheriff," said one of the posse, who seemed to dread a tragedy there and then.

"I don't think so," said the sheriff.

"I am sure of it."

"But I can't see why."

"This is nonsense. I have no time to waste with you, sir," and Jesse glared at the sheriff. "Prisoner, move on! I'll shoot any man who interferes," and the prisoner moved on up the road, followed by Jesse and his bandits.

But ere they had gone a mile they heard the posse coming after them at full speed.

"They have decided to fight us," Jesse said. "We can't afford to do it. Turn him loose, Jim, and we'll run for it. Take to the woods, my man, and don't let 'em get you."

The prisoner darted into the woods, and the posse rushed on with wild cheers in hot pursuit of the bandits.

## CHAPTER XI.

### ONE AGAINST SEVEN.

The detective did not care to have the posse come up with him, as they would probably hold him as a prisoner until his identity and mission could be established. That would be the cause of so much publicity in regard to himself and plans that his chances of success would be materially lessened.

"Keep mum—keep dark," he said to himself every day in the



week, and hence, when he saw the posse bearing down upon him he darted into the woods and kept out of the way.

The posse, however, kept on after the men on horseback, and the latter kept on up the road at full speed, the famous black horse in the lead.

"I wish the sheriffs in Missouri would all stay at home and keep still," he said to himself, as he made his way through the woods. "They can never hope to do more than shoot at some of the robbers as they go along the roads, and even then they are just as liable to shoot innocent people as guilty ones. I could soon break up the band if the posses would stay at home and not interfere. But the sheriffs all want to make themselves popular, and people like the excitement of chasing the robbers about the country. I could have gone on with 'em and watched for a chance to bag Jesse James again but for that intermeddling sheriff."

He had to keep away from the main road, and yet he wanted to follow it in the direction the bandits had gone.

But it was not an easy thing to do, as so many open farms lay along the road that forced him either to go round or through them.

Some ten miles farther on he stopped to talk with an old farmer who was at the gate as he came up.

The farmer gave him a drink of cold water from his well, and sold him some fruit.

He sat down on a horseblock and ate the fruit, talking pleasantly to the farmer as he did so.

An hour passed, and he was about to resume his tramp when he saw the James Boys coming up the road—the black horse in advance.

As the bandits came up Jesse looked at him in astonishment, and exclaimed:

"You here?"

"Yes."

"How long have you been here?"

"About an hour."

"How'd you get here?"

"Walked."

"Impossible!"

The bogus ferryman laughed.

"He has been hyar an hour at least," the old farmer said, "an' he came up on foot."

The bandits looked at him and then at each other.

They could hardly believe what they had heard. Yet there he was, and they knew he had no horse.

"Well, you are the best man on foot I ever heard of in all my life," Jesse said.

"I told you I could go sixty miles a day easily."

"You can't do it," the farmer said, very emphatically.

"Yes, I can."

"Don't believe it."

"Well, I am inclined to believe he can," Jesse James said. "Please give me a drink of water, sir?"

The farmer procured a gourd and gave him a drink of water fresh from the well.

They all took a drink of it, and then Jesse turned to the bogus ferryman and asked:

"Which way are you going?"

"To Kansas City, I reckon, and then West."

"Well, good luck to you."

"Same to you, sir," and he stood up and saw him ride off up the road on the famous black horse.

"Do you know who he is?" the farmer asked.

"No," he replied.

The farmer gazed after them till they were out of sight, and then said:

"That man on the black horse is Jesse James."

The tramp started as if stung, and exclaimed:

"No! it can't be!"

"Why not?"

"Because he behaved like a gentleman to me this morning."

"That's no reason. He can behave like a gentleman when he wants to."

"Do you know him?"

"No; never saw him before."

"How do you know, then?"

"By that black horse."

"Ever see the horse before?"

"No."

"Well?"

"He is said to have the finest and swiftest horse in the world, and there isn't a hair of any other color on him."

"That's like his."

"Yes; and I'd bet my farm that he is Jesse James."

"Why didn't you get a gun and shoot him?" the detective asked.

"His men would have shot me, and I am not ready to die yet," and the old farmer shook his head.

"Well, I wish I had known who he was," said the tramp, as he gazed up the road in the direction they had gone.

"What would you have done?"

"I'd have spotted him so I would have known him again."

"Bah! They tell me he can get up so many disguises that he has to introduce himself to his mother every time he goes to her. But he never goes without his horse, and that's what's going to be his ruin some day. There are few horses like him in the world, I reckon."

"He is a beautiful horse," the tramp said, as he prepared to resume his journey; "and if I ever see him again I'll know him."

"Bless your soul, sir, he sometimes puts white spots on the horse," and the farmer laughed heartily.

The tramp moved on, and the farmer watched him till he was out of sight up the road.

He had gone some five or six miles up the road, when he was surprised at seeing the black horse standing in the road, without a rider.

No other horse was with him, and the detective was puzzled to understand it.

"Jesse James never gets far away from his horse," he muttered, as he trudged on up to where the horse stood. "He must be in the woods there somewhere."

When he got nearly up to where Siroc stood, Jesse James came out of the woods and sprang into the saddle.

"Hello!" exclaimed the outlaw, "you have caught up to me, I see."

"Yes. Where are the others?"

"About a mile ahead by this time. I told 'em not to wait for me and they rode on. I'll soon catch up with 'em," and he turned Siroc's head up the road as if to start off.

"Hold on!" said the man on foot. "Hands up!"

"Eh! What!" and Jesse looked around to find himself covered by a big six-shooter.

"Hands up, I say!"

"Yes—up they are!" and Jesse held his hands up above his head.

"Drop that gun or I'll drop you!" said Jim Cummins, as he came out of the bushes and covered the ferryman.

Bob, Clell and the others came out, too, and Jesse James gave a sarcastic chuckle.

Crabb was dumfounded.

They had him dead to rights.

Jim had insisted on the game in order to satisfy himself that the man was all right. He had become suspicious of him.

He dropped the pistol with which he had held up Jesse James and held out both hands, saying:

"Put 'em on. I give up."

"Put 'em on, Bob," said Jesse.

Bob took a pair of steel handcuffs from his pocket and advanced upon him to put them upon his wrists.

Quick as a flash he was seized in a pair of steel-like arms by the detective, who backed into the woods on the other side of the road, using him as a shield.

"Kill him!" cried Jesse, springing to the ground and rushing at him.

They were afraid to fire for fear of hitting Bob.

Just as Jesse got near enough to reach over Bob's shoulder to fire at the daring detective's face, he was knocked senseless to the ground.

Crabb had hurled Bob against him with the force of a catapult, and both went down in a heap, with a thousand stars flashing before their eyes.

Crack!

Crack!

Jim and Clell both fired at him as he turned and dashed through the thicket.

Crack!

Crack!

Crack!

Cole, Frank and Wood blazed away, too, and then dashed forward in hot pursuit.

Crack!

Crack!

They shot in his direction, hoping a stray bullet might hit him.

But they saw nothing more of him, and had to return to their horses, angry and disappointed.

They found Jesse and Bob pulling themselves together in a half dazed condition.

"Did you let him get away?" Jesse asked.

"It looks that way," Cole replied.

"It beats anything I ever heard of," the bandit chief said. "Here are seven of us, and we had him dead to rights in the middle of the road."

"Yes."

"I think we had better disperse and go out of business. Our luck, or skill, or something, is deserting us."



"We made a mistake," said Jim.  
 "What was it?"  
 "We should all have emptied our revolvers into him the moment he held you up."  
 "That's so," said Clell.  
 "Yes," added Frank, "and that would have ended the matter."  
 Jesse sat down on the ground and leaned back against a tree, looking very pale.  
 "Yes, yes; our hindsights are good—very good. But our foresight ain't worth a pinch of mud."  
 "Are you hurt, Jesse?" Cole asked.  
 "I am very sick. I am half killed," and he looked pale and weak.  
 "Here, take a pull at this," said Jim, producing a pocket flask in which was about a gill of brandy.  
 He drank it and then closed his eyes and lay down on the ground.  
 "Take the horses back from the road, boys," said Cole. "We may have to stay here a while."  
 Clell and Wood hastened to remove the horses further back into the woods, and then returned to where Jesse and Bob were.  
 The latter was not so much hurt as Jesse was, as he was soon on his feet again.  
 "I tell you," he said to Cole, "he has the strength of a giant. I was but an infant in his hands. I thought a polar bear had me."  
 "I never saw such daring in all my life," remarked Jim, "and if he is that fellow Crabb we have got to look out. He is a dangerous man."  
 "He is Crabb," said Jesse, at the foot of the tree.  
 "Sure of that, are you?" Frank asked.  
 "Yes; and he is your ghost on the bluff."  
 "Sure of that, too, I suppose?"  
 "Yes. He told me so."  
 "When?"  
 "When he captured me before."  
 With all his faults Frank knew he was truthful.  
 Yet it was difficult for him to believe that the form which bullets could not affect could be flesh and blood.  
 Jesse recovered in an hour sufficient to get into the saddle again. But he was a sick man.  
 Said he to Cole Younger:  
 "I am hurt all over from head to foot and must have a rest somewhere. I reckon I had better go back to the Chalk Bluffs."  
 "That would not be safe, Jesse," Cole said to him.  
 "It is as safe there as here."  
 "But they have got that place spotted, you know."  
 "Yes, I know; but I must go somewhere," he replied.  
 "Why not go to old Moll Prather's place?" asked Clell, who was riding by the other side of Jesse.  
 "Lord, yes!" the bandit chief exclaimed. "She is better than any doctor with her roots and herbs. Do you know the way there from here?" and he turned a very pale face to Clell as he spoke.  
 "Yes, I think I do."  
 "How far is it?" Cole asked.  
 "About seven or eight miles."  
 "Can you hold up that long, Jess?" Cole asked him.  
 "Yes—I've got to."

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE HOLD-UP AT MOLL PRATHER'S.

Old Moll Prather was a widow who lost a son in the War of Secession.

He was one of Quantrell's men, and once Jesse James saved his life.

She had always been a firm friend of the James Boys, and her unmarried daughter, a very robust maiden of some thirty years of age, was equally friendly toward them.

When Jesse James rode up to her farm-house and said he had been hurt and wanted to rest a day or two, she and her daughter Mary gave him a hearty welcome.

He was put to bed at once and the old woman dosed him with hot drinks and wrapped him up in blankets till he felt as though he was in a furnace.

"Look out for Crabb," he said to Cole.

"Yes; and if we see him we'll make a sieve of him," replied Bob.

"I am not his friend any more than you are, Jesse."

"What has happened?" Mary Prather asked of Bob.

"We had a circus with a detective to-day," Bob replied.

"Did he get away?"

"Yes."

"Was he hurt?"

"No."

"Did he hurt Jesse?"

"Yes."

"And you, too?"

"Yes."

"Where were the others?"

"They were all there to see the fun."

"Do you mean to say that one man got away from seven of you?"

"Yes."

"I don't believe it. You James Boys never would tell the truth."

Bob and the others laughed.

"It's the truth," said Jim. "He played us a trick and slipped away from us into the bushes. He was on foot and we were on horses. You know how quickly one can dodge in the bushes?"

"Yes. Did he look like a detective?"

"No. He was dressed like a common laborer."

"And did he wear a slouch hat and brown jeans coat?"

"Why, yes! Have you seen him?"

"Yes. He was here not an hour ago."

"Great Scott! What did he want here?"

"He asked for a glass of buttermilk. I gave it to him, and when I refused pay for it he asked me my name."

"Did you tell him?"

"Yes; why?"

"It must be Crabb!" and Cummins looked at his companions as he made the remark.

"Yes; and how he should get away from the main road and come this way I can't understand," said Cole.

"Nor I," added Bob.

"Which way did he go?" Jim asked of Mary.

"Up the road toward the river."

"Did he say which way he was going?"

"No."

"Shall we take a run up the road?" Jim asked of Cole.

"No," and Cole shook his head.

"Why not?"

"Jesse can't go."

"Leave him here."

"No."

"Why not? What are you afraid of?"

"Crabb."

Jim glared at him.

"He might come in and march Jesse off as soon as we were out of sight. That's his game, you know."

"That's so," said Frank.

"Yes, that's his game," put in Clell, "and we don't want to play into his hand."

"No, not much," added Bob.

"Well, I'd like to see one man come in here and capture Jesse James while I am about," snapped Mary Prather. "I don't know what has come over you men," and she gave them each a look that was just the least bit contemptuous. "I've never yet seen the man I was afraid of, and I am but a weak woman."

"Weak woman!" exclaimed Wood Hite, laughing. "I'll bet money you can lick any man in our band!"

They all laughed, and Mary joined in with them, saying:

"I know I am strong, and I am glad of it; but I am not a fighter, as you are."

"Oh, I am not a fighter," said Wood.

"You ain't?"

"No."

"Then you had better get out of this business and retire to private life," she retorted.

"I would—if the sheriff would let me," he retorted very promptly.

"So would all of us!" put in Cole.

"Yes. I would if I could with safety," said Frank.

"We have been driven into it," said Bob, "and there is very little fun in it."

"But about that man who was here an hour ago," said Cole, as he looked at his watch. "Four of us might take a run up the road and two remain here on guard."

"Yes, that would do."

They went out—four—Cole, Jim, Frank and Wood—leaving Bob and Clell in the house, and mounted their horses.

In two minutes more they were dashing up the road at a good speed.

A couple of miles down the road they came to a farm-house where the farmer and his two sons were making a gate near the roadside in front of the house.

"Has a man passed here on foot since noon to-day?" Cole asked them.

"No," said the farmer.

"Sure of that?"

"I'm sure I didn't see 'im if he did."

"Nor I nuther," said one of the boys.

"Been out here since noon?"

"Yes, since mornin'," the old man replied.

"Anybody come by in a wagon?"



"Old Jones come by."

"When?"

"Dinner-time."

"Anybody with him?"

"No."

"Guess he didn't get this far," said Frank James.

"No. He must be lying about somewhere, on the lookout for a chance."

"Then we'd better go back," suggested Jim Cummins.

"Yes," and they turned and rode back toward the old Prather place.

They had not been out of sight of the widow's farm-house ten minutes ere Bob said he'd go out to the stable and feed the horses.

"Yes," said Clell. "I'll be along in a few minutes and help you. Don't feed my horse. I want to attend to him myself, as I am afraid something ails him."

"All right," returned Bob. "I reckon you want to make some pretty speeches to Mary. I'll wait for you, but don't make 'em too long," and he went out in time to escape an indignant glance from the robust maiden.

"Well, he's impudent enough, anyway," she said to Clell.

"Oh, Bob is always funny," Clell replied. "We don't mind what he says. I'll go and ask Jesse about feeding Siroc," and he went into the room occupied by the bandit chief and had a short talk with him about the amount of corn the black beauty was to have.

Bob entered the stable and fed his own horse, after which he came out of the stall and found the muzzle of a revolver thrust into his face.

"Speak a word and you are a dead man!" said a man whom he at once recognized as the bogus ferryman. "Hold out your hands!"

Bob obeyed.

He dared not trifle with him.

He held out his hands.

And was very promptly handcuffed.

Then he was gagged and thrust into an oat bin and shut in.

Just ten minutes later Clell came in, and in less than five minutes was Bob's companion in misery in the oat bin.

The lid of the bin was fastened down, and then the detective walked out of the stable and made his way to the house.

He went in, and Mary recognized him as the man to whom she had given a glass of buttermilk a little over an hour before.

"You here again?" she greeted, as he came in, pistol in hand.

"Yes," he replied, and then glided into the room where Jesse lay half asleep in bed.

"You are mine again, Jesse James," he said, covering him with his revolver.

"And you are mine!" said Mary, from the next room, covering him with a Winchester rifle, which she had taken from a rack on the wall just behind her.

Jesse James laughed.

And there was a cold, steely glitter in his eyes as he sat up in bed and looked at the brave detective.

"I am glad to see you, Crabb," the bandit chief said. "You are the best in your line, and I've been puzzled to know how to get rid of you. The problem is solved. I have you at last," and he got up out of the bed and proceeded to dress himself.

"Don't be too sure, Jesse," said Crabb. "She has the drop on me, and I have it on you."

"So you have, but if you fire she will too, and we'll then go out of life together. You are not quite ready to do that, are you?"

"Well, no; but I am thinking I can take her along with us, as I am a pretty hard man to kill, you know. You have tried a Winchester on me yourself."

"Yes, but it was at long range. You can't play that game here. Mary, where's Bob and Clell?"

"Out at the barn," said Mary.

"Tell your mother to call 'em in."

The old lady heard him, and ran to the door and sung out:

"Bob! Clell! Come here, quick!"

Then she waited a minute or so and repeated the call.

Still they did not appear.

She ran to the stable and looked through it for the two bandits. They could not be seen, and she ran back to the house.

Jesse had just taken a pair of handcuffs from his pocket, and held them up.

"Hold out your hands," he said. "Shoot him, Mary, if he resists."

He held out his hands, and Jesse advanced to put them on him. Quick as a flash of lightning the detective sprang at him.

Crack!

Mary fired.

The bullet went through the wall of the house at the farther side of the room.

Ere she could fire again the detective hurled Jesse at her with such force that both of them went down in a heap.

Then he sprang through a window, darted around the house,

leaped over a fence, and made for a piece of woods not fifty yards away.

Jesse James picked himself up, the blood trickling down his face from a scratch made by coming violently in contact with the rifle held in the hands of Mary.

He was half-dazed by the collision, but had the presence of mind to spring up and rush back into the room for his pistol.

The intrepid detective had fled.

Jesse saw how he had escaped through the window.

"Gone!" he hissed. "He must be a demon in league with Satan!"

He returned and assisted Mary Prather to her feet.

She was dazed and hysterical, strong and courageous as she was.

As for her mother, the old lady had fainted dead away in her terror.

"Where is he?" Mary asked, as soon as she could speak.

"Gone," said Jesse.

"Gone? Gone where?"

"To the woods, I reckon."

"Got away from us?"

"Yes."

"Did he throw you at me?"

"Yes."

She was silent for a minute or two, and then said:

"Well, it's the first time in my life I ever had a man thrown at me."

"It's the first time in my life I was ever thrown at a woman," he returned. "I hope you are not hurt."

"I don't know. I can only hope I am not killed. Oh, the impudence of that man!" and then she burst into tears, a woman's refuge in time of trouble and excitement.

Jesse took up the old lady and laid her on the bed.

"Look after your mother, Mary," he said. "I must go out and see what has become of Bob and Clell. I am afraid something has happened to them," and he went out and made his way to the stable.

He found the horses all right, but did not see either Bob or Clell.

"Bob! Clell!" he called, as he leaned against the oat bin.

He heard a knocking inside the bin, and very promptly opened it.

"Great Scott!"

He reached with his knife and cut the handkerchiefs that gagged them.

Then he produced a file which he always carried with him, and soon set their hands free.

In a few hurried words Clell and Bob told how they had been held up and made prisoners by Crabb.

Jesse told his story, too, and all three went back to the house to tell Mary Prather what a brave girl she was.

They had just finished doing so when Cole and the others rode up and dismounted at the gate.

"He has not gone far up the road," said Cole, as he came in. "Hello! What's the matter? How did you get that scratch, Jesse?"

Jesse told him, and a more astonished set was never seen.

"That fellow is worse than the old Nick himself!" exclaimed Jim.

"We must keep together hereafter, at least until we fix him," Jesse said.

"Yes, and we want to fix him before we do anything else," said Cole. "I am getting afraid to go anywhere alone."

## CHAPTER XIII.

### CRABB CAPTURES SIX OF THE JAMES BOYS.

After consultation, the bandits decided to stay where they were till the next day.

"Crabb won't call in the posse," said Jesse, as he talked the matter over with his companions. "He works on his own lines, and waits for a chance to pick us up one at a time. That's his game. He won't attack two or three at once. Just keep together and we are safe."

"I'd kill him or go hang myself," said Mary Prather. "To think of one man putting seven men to such extremes! Oh, if I were a man!"

"Put on men's clothes and join us," said Clell.

"If it were not for my mother I would," she replied.

"Don't think of it," Jesse said, shaking his head. "Here's \$1,000, which I want you to put away and keep against the time when you may need it," and he tossed a roll of bills in her lap.

"Do you give me all this?" she asked.

"Yes. You saved me from capture to-day, and Jesse James is one who never forgets a thing of that kind."

"Well, I am sure I thank you from the bottom of my heart, and I did not expect anything of this kind."



"No, of course not," he replied, "and that is why I am glad to give it to you. You and your mother may need it some day."

"Yes, we may, but I hope not," and she put the roll of bills in the pocket of her dress.

Then she and her mother went about preparing supper for them.

"We haven't beds enough for all of you," said Mary, later in the evening.

"We shall sleep on the hay up in the barn," Jesse said, in reply.

"We can all be together, then, and can guard our horses in case any one seeks to steal them."

"Then I can fasten up the house?"

"Yes, as much as you please."

They all went to the barn together and made themselves comfortable up in the loft on the hay.

When they awoke in the morning, nothing had been seen or heard of the detective whom they feared so much.

Jesse James felt so much better that he decided to go on with the others.

They ate breakfast and then went out to the barn to saddle their horses.

Jim Cummins was the first to mount.

He gave vent to some very vigorous profanity and leaped to the ground again.

"What's the matter?" Cole asked, as he sprang into his saddle.

Ere he got his answer, he too, sprang to the ground and imitated Jim in his language.

"Here's a bent pin in my saddle," Jim said.

"And in mine," added Cole.

The others examined theirs, and found the same little annoyance. Then there was a laugh.

"Who did it?" Jim asked, looking at his companions.

"Crabb, of course," Jesse replied.

"He is a practical joker as well as a practical detective," remarked Wood Hite, as he took the pin out of the seat of his saddle.

"Yes, and he is having a good deal of fun out of us just now," said Clell.

"Well, maybe we'll have some fun with him some day," added Jesse, as he mounted Siroc. "I think I could enjoy stringing him up."

"I am sure I could," returned Frank.

"Oh, we'd have a circus if we could get him dead to rights once," said Bob, as they rode out of the barnyard.

Out on the road Jesse felt decidedly better than on the day before.

But he was the maddest man in the State, for he felt very sore over the way the detective had used him as a brick with which to knock a woman down.

"There's the old man and his sons at work on that gate yet," said Cole, as they rode by where they had inquired for Crabb the day before.

"Did you find your man?" the old farmer asked, on recognizing Cole.

"No."

"He passed here this morning."

"Eh! What?"

"He passed here this morning," repeated the old man.

Cole rode up to him and asked:

"Are you sure of that?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"He was afoot and wore a brown jeans coat and wool hat."

"Yes, that's him. Did you speak to him?"

"Yes; I said somebody was looking for him."

"What did he say?"

"He kinder smiled and said 'yes,' and went on as if he didn't keer a cent."

"How long since?"

"A half hour, I reckon."

"Come on," said Jesse, leading the way up the road.

They rode faster than usual.

"It's no use, Jesse," Cole said. "He'll go into the bushes when he sees us coming."

"We may see him in a lane."

"Yes, that's so," and they rode on in the hope of seeing the detective somewhere in the road.

But they did not, and they rode on till in the middle of the afternoon.

Then Jim suggested that they look out for something to eat.

"Yes, I am getting hungry myself," Jesse admitted.

At the next farmhouse they stopped and asked to be served with a dinner, for which they were willing to pay.

"My wife is sick," the farmer said, "and can't cook it for ye. Old Branham's tavern is only a mile from here up the road, and you can get all you want there."

"Ah! I know that place," said Wood Hite. "There's a store and post-office there, I believe."

"Yes," said the farmer. "Branham runs the store, post-office and tavern, and he keeps mighty good liquor, too."

They pushed on for Branham's, and got there after a sharp ride of some ten minutes.

Branham was an old man, who had been running the place for thirty years.

He had a young wife, and he left her to run the tavern, and he looked after the store and post-office.

She had a young brother to attend the bar, and that young chap was of the opinion that he owned the place.

About half an hour before the James Boys arrived, a man came in and asked for a drink of Bourbon.

He set out the decanter and glass, and let him pour out a drink to suit himself.

When the young man's back was turned toward him, the stranger poured a few drops of a clear, colorless liquid into the decanter from a small vial which he took from his vest pocket.

Then he drank his whisky and passed out of the tavern and over to the store, where he made some little purchases and then sat down to talk with old Branham.

The old man was very communicative, and talked right straight along for quite a time.

But by and by seven men rode up to the tavern and dismounted.

The old man was on the lookout for a posse, as one had passed there a few days before, and they stopped for dinner and drinks.

"That looks like Jesse James' horse," he said to the stranger to whom he had been talking.

"Yes, only I've never seen his horse," the stranger replied.

"I haven't, either, but it's a fine black horse, and Jesse James's is said to be the finest in the world."

"Yes, I've heard so."

Just then a young woman came in and said seven men wanted dinner right away, and she'd have to have some eggs.

He gave her two dozen, and she hurried back to the tavern across the road.

"Let's have something to drink, boys," said Cole Younger, as soon as they had bathed their hands and faces.

"Yes, gimme Bourbon," said Jesse, and all but Clell took a drink from the decanter into which the stranger had dropped a colorless liquid a half-hour before.

Clell drank hard cider, of which he was very fond, and then they sat down to wait for dinner.

When dinner was announced, Clell was the only one who could get up out of his chair.

The others were fast asleep.

He looked at them all and wondered what was the matter.

Then he shook Cole violently and sung out:

"Dinner!"

Cole fell out of his chair to the floor.

"What in thunder is the matter?" he exclaimed, giving two more a hard shaking, only to find them sound asleep.

Then the truth flashed upon him.

"They have been drugged!" he said, and he turned on the young man behind the bar.

"No, they hain't," said the youth.

"What's the matter with 'em, then?"

"I dunno," and the youth shook his head as he gazed at the sleepers.

"I tell you they've been drugged!" said Clell.

"There ain't no drugged liquor here."

"What did they drink?"

"Bourbon," and he set the decanter on the bar.

Clell recognized it as the one from which the others had taken their drinks.

He knew that something was wrong.

He was satisfied, too, that the youth was not the guilty one.

"I'll go and call Mr. Branham," said the young man, running out of the bar-room and crossing over to the store.

Clell ran to his companions and secured all their money, after which he ran out through another door behind a shed and quickly changed his disguise.

Old Branham and two customers came running over with the youth.

One of the customers was the man who had drugged the liquor.

Without saying a word, he went to work to place handcuffs on the six bandits.

"What do you mean, sir?" the landlord demanded.

"They are the James Boys, and I have captured six of them," was the reply.

"The James Boys!"

"Yes. That one there is Jesse James," and he pointed to Jesse as he spoke. "I drugged that decanter of liquor there, knowing they were just behind me and would stop for a meal and drinks."

Old Branham was greatly excited, and didn't know what to say or do.



The young man ran into the dining-room and told his sister what had happened in the office.

Just then Clell came in disguised as an old man, and, on seeing six men lying on the floor, said:

"All on a drunk, eh?"

"No. They are the James Boys," said the old tavernkeeper.

"Eh! Eh! Lemme go!" and he backed toward the door with every semblance of fear in his air and manner.

"Oh, they can't hurt you," said Crabb, for he it was. "They are prisoners."

"Gosh! All on 'em prisoners?"

"Yes."

"How'd you ketch 'em?"

"By drugging their whisky."

"Well, well! Do it by yerself?"

"Yes. I've been after them for a long time."

"Be yer a detective feller?"

"Yes, I am a detective."

"Which is Jesse James?"

"That one over there."

He went over and took a good look at his unconscious chief, as he lay there on the floor.

Each had a pair of irons on him that fastened with a spring.

"Whatcher goin' ter do with 'em?" he asked.

"Take 'em to jail, of course."

"When'll they wake up ergin?"

"They'll sleep several hours yet."

"The stuff won't kill 'em, eh?"

"No."

Clell was worried.

If they remained in that condition several hours, the news would bring in men from the farms around and lessen the chances of rescue.

"If I shoot him now," he reasoned with himself, "I'll have to hold the house against all comers till they can recover. I may not be able to do that. What in thunder shall I do?"

He went to a chair and sat down.

"How can I get 'em to jail?" Crabb asked of old Branham.

"Haul 'em in a wagon," said the old man.

"Have you got one?"

"Yes, but it won't be here till night."

"How far is it to the jail?"

"Eleven miles."

"I'll march 'em there, then, if I can get two or three men to help me guard 'em."

"You can get 'em, but how can they march when they can't wake up?"

The detective took a small vial from one of his pockets and held it up between his thumb and finger, and said:

"That'll wake 'em up."

"How?"

"One drop in a teaspoonful of water in their mouths will set 'em all right."

It had a bluish tint, and the detective looked at it with a great deal of interest.

"Get me a glass of water and a teaspoon, young man," he said to the young barkeeper.

The articles were soon produced.

He drank two-thirds of the water, and then poured about four drops of the bluish tinted liquid into the glass.

"Turn that fellow on his back there and I'll show you how it will work," he said to Clell and the old man.

They turned Jim Cummins over on his back, and the detective held his nose and put a teaspoonful of the mixture in the glass into his mouth.

He swallowed it, of course, and then they awaited to see the result.

In five minutes Jim opened his eyes, glared around at the three men who were standing over him.

Then he tried to get up and found himself handcuffed.

"What the—what does this mean?" he demanded, very much astonished.

"Ain't you old enough to know?" the detective asked.

"What's the matter with the others? Are they dead?"

"No; only sleeping off the effects of a little drug in your whisky."

"And you—who are you?"

"Me?"

"Yes."

"My name is Crabb."

Jim looked at him in wondering amazement.

This one man had laid out more than half the band single-handed.

He was uneasy.

If the authorities got hold of him he would be hanged, for he had the blood of his fellow-man on his hands.

He said no more at the time, and sat up and gazed around him

as the others came to, one by one, under the influence of the bluish-tinted liquid which had been put into their mouths.

Jesse James was the last one to recover, and he was dumb-founded.

"He's got us, Jesse," said Jim.

"How'd he do it?" Jesse asked.

Jesse looked at the young barkeeper, and that individual trembled like a leaf.

"He didn't know anything about it," Crabb said, laughing. "I dropped it into the decanter behind his back."

Jesse did not make any comments on the situation.

"I am going to tie you all together and march you to the county jail," Crabb said.

"I don't think we have any say in the matter," remarked Jesse.

"Well, no, not much. Still, you can talk as much as you wish."

"Why not put us on our horses?"

"Don't want to be bothered with 'em."

"All right," and Jesse relapsed into silence.

"Got any small sized rope in your store?" Crabb asked of old Branham.

"Yes."

"Let me have about fifty feet of it. I want to tie 'em up strong and fast."

"Come and make your selection."

"No; I can't leave 'em here."

"Bring 'em over there, then."

"No; bring the rope here."

The old man went out, and the detective followed him to the door.

Clell rose to his feet, drew his revolver, and:

Crack!

The detective fell forward on his face.

"Murder! Murder!" yelled the young barkeeper, dashing across the way to the store.

The roar of rushing horses came from up the road.

Clell ran out and saw a score of horsemen coming.

"Quick! Quick, boys!" he cried. "We must get out of this! The posse is coming!" and they all ran out to their horses.

Clell assisted them into the saddle, and they dashed off down the road at full speed.

The posse came up and lost fully ten minutes in getting information.

By that time the bandits were two miles away.

"Into the woods, boys!" cried Jesse, as they fled along the edge of a heavy piece of timber.

They turned into the woods, and, dismounting, led their horses away from the road.

Then they dismounted and used their files to get rid of the irons on their wrists.

"He played it well," Jesse said.

"Yes," returned Clell. "It was his last game, though. He'll never bother us more."

"I don't believe that young fellow was innocent of that drugging business," said Jim Cummins. "I'm in favor of going back there and hanging him and the old man."

"The posse is there," and Jesse shook his head.

"You have no arms. I am the only one who has any weapons," said Clell.

"Nor any money to buy arms with," added Jesse, with no little degree of bitterness in his tones.

"Your money is safe," returned Clell. "I got it all."

"Lord, but I am glad to hear that," exclaimed Jesse. "You have saved us all to-day, Clell!" and he grasped the young outlaw's hand and shook it warmly. "How is it you escaped the drug?"

"I drank cider."

"Yes, I remember."

Clell then told them how he had made the discovery that they all had been drugged, and he lost no time in changing his disguise in order to get a chance to make a rescue.

"You played your hand even better than he did his," Jesse said, "and we six owe you our lives, Clell."

"Well, we are all pledged to stand by each other," Clell replied.

"Yes, and you have done so. We had better stay here till night, and then get away to some point where we can buy arms again."

"There they go!" said Jim. "They don't see our trail at all!" and they stood quiet and listened to the posse as they rode by along the highway.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### IN KANSAS CITY.

Being unarmed, the James Boys decided to go to Kansas City by riding all night, in order to find such arms as they were in need of.

"If we meet with any opposition," Jesse James said, "we'll have to run for it, as we are in no condition to fight."



"That's so," said Cole Younger. "I really feel queer without my revolver."

"So do I," put in Jim.

"I feel like a fish in dry sand," added Bob.

"Oh, you have been captured two or three times and disarmed," said Wood Hite, turning on Bob. "You ought to be used to it by this time."

"Well, I am not, all the same."

"See here," put in Frank, "why not go back to Prather's and leave our horses there, and go up on the boat? It would be the safest way."

"I have never yet found a safer place than on Siroc's back," Jesse replied. "We'll go through in the saddle."

"Well, we'll have to go 'round by another way, then," Wood Hite said.

"Why?" Jim asked.

"There may be fifty people at Branham's. You know how such news flies, and how people gather when somebody is killed."

"Yes, Wood is right," Jesse remarked. "We must not go by Branham's."

"Which way, then?"

"Hanged if I know, unless we go the way that posse went, and that is too great a risk."

"Go around by Branham's, and get into the road again a mile or two beyond his place," suggested Wood.

"That's the thing! Come on," and Jesse led Siroc out to the road and sprang into the saddle.

The others followed.

When within half a mile of Branham's place they turned into an old field and made their way around the old tavern and store, guided by the lights from them.

It took them nearly an hour to get around the place, but then they had too much at stake to complain of the time.

On reaching the road, they mounted again and rode forward at quite a rapid pace.

"We are a posse, or part of one," said Jesse, "if we should meet any people. We must tell what took place at Branham's, if the news has gone ahead of us up this road."

They passed several houses, and men and women ran out to hear the news.

Jesse or Jim or Cole told the story that had been agreed on, and the farmers and their families were satisfied.

"Was the detective killed?" one man asked.

"Yes, as dead as a smoked herring," said Jim.

"What a pity! How glad the James Boys must be that they have got rid of him at last."

"Yes," assented Jim. "He was the best man they ever had sent against them."

By and by they got beyond the range of the news, and no more questions were asked, and then they hurried on, riding all night, reaching Kansas City a little after sunrise.

"Exchange horses with me, Cole," Jesse said to that outlaw, "and I'll go in with Clell, who will bring back a horse blanket to put over him."

Cole dismounted, and the exchange was made.

"Come in two at a time," he said, as he and Clell rode away, "and we'll excite no attention at the widow's."

The widow and her two daughters gave them a hearty welcome, and Jesse found that good quarters had been provided for him and his band.

When they were all in, two of them were to act as hired men about the barn and stable.

By that means any attempt at inspecting the horses would be detected, and would save the necessity of hiring unknown persons.

The first thing they did was to call Clell into a room and get the money he had saved for them.

Then, after a thorough disguising proceeding, each man went out and bought himself a brace of revolvers, cartridges and a knife, after which he bought some clothing fit to be worn about town by well-to-do business men.

All that was done in the afternoon of the day of their arrival, and that evening they took the widow and her two daughters to the theatres. Each behaved as though he was used to that sort of thing.

The next day Bob came in and beckoned to Jesse.

The chief followed him upstairs to his room.

"Crabb is alive," he whispered to him as soon as the door was closed.

"H! What?"

"Crabb is alive and—"

"How do you know?"

"He's in account of—"

Jesse did not wait to hear him finish what he was going to say. He snatched the paper from his hand and saw the big head lines announcing the capture and demise of nearly the entire band of the James Boys' bandits at Branham's tavern.

He read the sensational account with a burning eagerness, and found it quite correct in the main.

It told all about how the wily detective had planned to capture the entire band by drugging a decanter of whisky at the old tavern, and how he got all save one down on the floor and put the irons on them. That one managed to appear just as he had restored the others to consciousness, and the result was the brave detective was shot down. A posse, led by a deputy sheriff, coming up, caused the bandits to mount and fly for their lives. They went southward, and it is believed they are making for Arkansas. The brave detective was shot in the head, the ball grazing his head so hard as to make an ugly scalp wound, and stunning him to unconsciousness for several hours. He is up again and all right, except for a very sore head.

"This is the worst news we have had in a year," said Jesse, as he folded up the paper and put it into his pocket.

"Yes," said Bob. "But I don't think he will be ready for business till his head gets well."

"That is a matter of two weeks."

"Many things happen in two weeks."

"Yes. Send Cole up here."

Cole came up, and Jesse showed him the paper.

"Well, I am sorry Clell didn't finish him," Cole said.

"Yes, so am I."

Bob told Clell down-stairs, and Clell would not believe it till he had read it for himself.

"I was sure I had settled him," he said.

"Yes, so was I, but it seems that he is alive, and not very much hurt, either."

"Yes. Well, he'll be likely to wait a week or two before doing any business."

"Yes, very likely."

"People will think we have gone to Arkansas."

"Yes, but he knows better."

"He?"

"Yes. He knows we were making for Kansas City."

"So he did. I never thought of that."

They spent a week in Kansas City, and during that time they were all so well disguised that none of their most intimate friends knew them, and they met many of them during their strolls about town.

But they kept away from saloons and places of such resort, for they knew detectives would be looking for them there.

Jesse watched the papers to see if he could get some news of the movements of Detective Crabb. But he found nothing about him save comments on his wonderful capture of the bandits.

"He is on our trail again," he said to himself one evening, "and I am going to put up a job on him. I am going to get a white horse and make a raid on him, and see if that won't make his head swim. I read an account in this morning's paper of a pure white horse which was a match for Siroc in speed and bottom. I'll see that horse in the morning, and if he has one-half the good qualities of Siroc I'll buy him."

The next day he went to the stable where the white horse was said to be for sale.

Cole Younger went with him.

The white horse was a splendid animal in every respect.

He was the size and build of Siroc, and Jesse saw that he had both speed and bottom. He rode him around the yard, and made up his mind to own him.

"What do you want for him?" he asked the dealer.

"One thousand dollars," was the reply.

"He is not worth it," he said.

"I think he is worth more, but his owner says that's his price. I was offered \$900 for him yesterday."

"I'll give \$750."

"Pooh! He wouldn't think of it for a moment."

"Very well. That's my price," and he turned and walked away.

The dealer did not call him back, and Jesse went home.

In the afternoon he went to the stable again, and the dealer said:

"I have \$900 offered for that white horse."

"Why in thunder don't you take it, then?"

"The owner says he wouldn't take \$999 in gold for him. It's \$1,000 or nothing."

"Can he show a clean title to the horse?"

"He is a responsible man."

"Do you endorse his responsibility?"

"Yes."

"Then I'll take him at \$1,000."

"Do you want me to be responsible for the owner of the horse?"

"Yes, or it's no sale."

"Very well. I'll do it. I know the man."

So Jesse bought the horse under the name of Howard, and rode him back to the stable where he kept Siroc.

He had painted a white star on Siroc's forehead, and two of his



feet were made the same color, so he had little fears of his being recognized by any one as the famous black horse of the bandit.

The next day he and Cole went out to try the speed of the two horses on the highway beyond the city limits.

He rode Siroc and Cole the white horse.

The trial of speed was a wonder.

The two horses kept side by side in a three-mile heat.

"He is worth \$10,000!" exclaimed Cole.

"Yes," said Jesse. "I am glad I bought him. He may be of service to us yet."

"Yes, if only to keep him from being used against us."

"I've just got a new idea, Cole."

"Glad to hear it. What is it?"

"To advertise for horses with a speed equal to Siroc's, for the purpose of running down Jesse James."

Cole looked at him in surprise.

"What's the object?" Cole asked, after a pause.

"Keep off suspicion, get hold of good horses for our boys, and then make a raid that will astonish the world."

"Whew! That is an idea."

"Yes, and a good one."

"What's the speed required?"

"To equal this white horse's."

"Ah!"

"Yes, and each must run against him, and that will get up a series of races that may give us chances to scoop a pile of money."

"Yes—yes. They'd let us have the race-track to test speed on."

"Oh, we can hire the track and pay for it by charging twenty-five cents admission to test races."

Cole reached out and grasped his hand.

"It's the best idea you ever had!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, I think it is. We have our own men to attend to the track and the horses."

Cole laughed.

He was tickled all over with the idea.

They returned home and told the others, and they, too, were equally well pleased.

That evening Jesse called on one of the city editors and arranged with him about booming the new idea.

Said he to the editor:

"There are large rewards offered for the capture of Jesse James and each member of his band. They can be caught only by men mounted on fast horses and armed with Winchesters. Give me ten men and ten horses equal to my white one in speed, and I will guarantee to rid the earth of the James Boys inside of three months, and I want to deposit with your paper \$5,000 as a guarantee of good faith and the payment of all bills."

"Well, that looks like business, Mr. Howard," the editor said, "and this paper will back you up with all its might and main."

"Very well. I'll bring you a check certified, to-morrow morning. Say nothing about it till the next day," and he shook hands with the editor and went away.

The editor at once wrote an editorial in which he promised a big sensation for their readers on the following day, in the James' Boys matter, revealing a plan by a well-known gentleman for the capture or final dispersion of the robbers.

Jesse smiled when he read it the next morning, and said:

"They are all on the make as well as we."

"Yes, of course."

"They will sell 10,000 extras to-morrow."

"Yes; maybe more."

"And gain in glory."

"Yes," and he and Cole chuckled over the affair for some time.

That day Jesse deposited \$20,000 in a bank under the name of James Howard, had a \$5,000 check certified, and took it to the editor of the paper.

Then he secured the use of the race course outside the city lines, paying \$1,000 for the use of it for a month.

When the plan was published the next day it created a sensation and captured the town.

Howard instantly became the most popular man in the city.

Everybody wanted to help him, make his acquaintance and volunteer to ride one of the fast horses.

He had agreed to pay \$1,000 for each horse whose speed equalled Snow Drift, the name he had given the white horse, and \$100 a month for riders—up to the number of ten—test of speed and horsemanship to be made on the race-track.

"It's just the thing," said the mayor, "and if I can render you any assistance in the enterprise, all you have to do is to let me know how, and I'll do it."

"It's simply a financial venture on my part," said Howard, "and the benefit will accrue to the whole State. I am going to charge admission to the grounds during the test racing in order to cover expenses and cost of horses. I'll have to pay out a good deal of money, you know."

"Yes, yes, so you will," said the mayor, "and I'll see that you have a special license for that."

Hundreds of men came to him at the race-track to engage as riders, and it was soon announced that he had engaged all he wanted.

The bandits were all on hand.

On the third day a man on a big iron-gray appeared and said he wanted a trial of speed.

Jesse looked at the horse, and found him a splendid animal.

"Bring him here at 2 p. m. to-morrow, and you can have a trial."

"Let me see that white horse?" the man asked.

He was taken to the stable and shown Snow Drift.

"He's a fine horse," he said.

"Yes," replied Howard, "and if yours equals him in speed I am to have him at \$1,000."

"Yes."

The man went away, and the next day it was announced that the first test of speed would be made.

Five thousand people came out to see it.

And each visitor paid twenty-five cents to pass the gate, and twenty-five cents extra for seats on the grand-stand.

Bob Younger, the lightest of all the bandits, was to ride the white horse.

The owner of the iron-gray hired a professional jockey to ride him.

"That won't do," Howard said. "I am buying a horse for war—not racing. A man weighing at least one hundred and forty pounds will have to ride him, and so a jockey at thirty pounds less weight is not a fair test."

"I don't agree with you."

"I don't care whether you do or not," Howard replied.

"I thought you wanted speed."

"So I do, and want a fair test, too."

"Well, that's what I want, too."

"But my rider weighs 147 pounds and yours 110."

"Get a lighter man to ride him, then."

"You will have to get a heavier man to ride yours or leave the track," said Howard.

"But I have no other, and——"

"Take one hour to find one."

The man kicked, but every one told him he was wrong, and he finally selected a man weighing 129 pounds.

"That will do," said Jesse.

The two horses were put on the track and a start made.

It was a splendid race.

But the white beat him in a mile heat just about a length, and there was tremendous excitement among the spectators.

"If he will do as well in a second heat," said Jesse to the owner of the iron-gray, "I'll give you the price for him."

"Let 'em go, then," was the reply.

They again made the race, and the spectators held their breath as the two splendid animals coursed around the track.

The iron-gray did splendidly, but was a half-length behind his first record as he passed under the wire.

A look of disappointment came into the face of the owner.

"I'll take him at \$900," said Howard.

"Done! He is yours!"

The trade was made, and the people saw that Howard meant business all the way through, and the papers encouraged men who had fast horses to bring them in and submit them to the test.

Over \$1,500 had been taken in, and the bandits were happy.

"It will pay even if we don't do any other business," Cole said.

"Yes," said Jesse. "But I am going to make this the biggest raid we have ever made."

The next day a dark bay was brought in, and a larger crowd than on the day before came out to see the race.

The sporting men soon put in an appearance, and thousands of dollars were put up on the result of the race.

Howard consulted the mayor and editor about letting in the betting men, and they said it would only make the scheme more popular, and that he should make them pay a commission on their winnings.

"Suggest that to them, then," Howard said. "Coming from me, they might think I was on the make in the matter," and they agreed to do so.

The sports did not object, and finally Howard suggested that all who wanted to bet should put up their money in the office and state

## CHAPTER XV.

### HOW JESSE JAMES SCOOPED KANSAS CITY.

As he expected, the indorsement of the paper disarmed all suspicion at once, and some of the best men in the city sought out Mr. Howard and congratulated him on his new idea.



their bets. When the race was run, the money would be paid, minus the commissions.

That was agreed to, too, and on the fourth day over \$10,000 was put up.

The commissions were ten per cent., the winner paying, and \$1,000 were made that way.

Thus the horses were being paid for by the public.

One day a man was seen hanging about the stable in which the horses were kept. Bob, Clell and Wood were in charge, and Clell kept his eye on the man.

He seemed to be very much interested in the white horse, and asked Clell to let him feel his coat, saying:

"He is the handsomest horse I ever saw."

"Yes," said Clell, "you may feel his coat, but we are not letting everybody handle him."

The man rubbed his hand over the glossy white coat of Snow Drift, saying:

"It's fine as silk."

But when Clell's back was turned for a few brief moments, the man poured something from a bottle on his handkerchief, and hastily rubbed it on Snow Drift's fore leg.

Wood Hite happened to see it from a stall opposite, and came running out with his revolver drawn.

"Hands up, you scoundrel!" he cried, aiming at the man's head.

"Why, what's the matter?" Clell asked.

"I saw him pour something from a bottle on his handkerchief, and then rub Snow Drift's leg with it," Wood explained.

"Which leg?"

"The right one, there."

Clell looked at the leg, and said:

"I don't see anything on it."

"There isn't anything on it," said the man.

"But what did you pour on your pocket-handkerchief?" Bob demanded.

"Here it is," and he drew the bottle from his pocket and handed it to Clell.

"It smells like benzine," said Clell.

"That's just what it is," the man said.

"Well, what did you rub it on the horse for?"

"I wanted to satisfy myself as to whether he was painted white or not."

"Painted?"

"Yes."

"Did you think he was painted?"

"Yes."

"Well, well!" and both Clell and Bob looked wonderingly at the man.

"I am a detective, looking for a fine horse which was stolen from a wealthy man in St. Joe, and he is every inch the build of this one, with his gait and speed. I suspected that he was the one I was looking for, but painted. You can understand me now, I hope?"

"Yes—yes, but the sooner you get out of here the better it will be for you and us. If Mr. Howard knew of this, he'd discharge us without a moment's warning."

"Why should he? No harm was done."

"Why, because we were so careless as to let a stranger get his hands on the horse."

"Yes, I see. I am sorry I put you out so. But you see how it was," and the man turned and left the stable.

"Wood—quick! Change your make-up," said Clell, "and shadow that fellow."

Wood Hite did as he was told and hurried on after the man.

He saw him go into a private residence on an obscure street in the city, and waited on the opposite side till another came out.

"That's the same man, or I am no judge of a man's walk," said Wood, and he followed the man down the street.

To his surprise, the man went to the residence of the widow where the bandits were living.

But he did not go in.

He looked about and went around to the stable and tried to peep through.

But Jesse had boards nailed over every crevice, and not a glimpse of anything could be had from the outside.

Wood saw him go away, and the evening was spent at hotels, going from one to another, and finally returning to the first house he had entered.

Wood saw the light in an upper room put out, and knew then that he had retired.

Then he went home and told Jesse what had happened.

Jesse was anxious.

"That fellow is Crabb," he said.

"The dence!" exclaimed Wood.

"Yes, I am sure of it."

"Why?"

"He wanted to see if the white horse was not Siroc painted

When he found he was not, he wants to see whether or not Siroc is here."

Wood was amazed.

He could not see why Jesse took such an idea into his head.

"We must kill him!" Jesse said.

"Yes," added Cole, "and make sure of it next time. The fellow has more lives than a black cat."

"But we must try to have some excuse for it, or we'll have to drop this game we are playing here."

"Yes—this is a gold mine here."

"Ah! I have it!" and Jesse seemed to have thought of something that put new life into him.

"What is it?" Cole asked.

"You know where three more of the band can be found in Jackson County."

"Yes."

"Well, take Siroc and slip away from here, go down there and get them and hold up a stage or two and all the State will soon be aroused. People will crowd us with fast horses and double our receipts at the gate. Crabb will be knocked out, for he can't make up his mind that we are the James Boys, or that we are not."

So it was arranged, and at daylight Cole was off with Siroc, though he had two white legs and a white star on his face.

Four days later the whole State heard that the James Boys held up two stages in one day, robbed the passengers and ripped open the mail bags.

Two well-known citizens of Kansas City were in one of the stages, and they were relieved of watches and money.

It had the effect to increase the interest in the scheme of Howard, for the news came that the black horse led all the others sent against him, and that only horses of equal speed could have any chance to overhaul him.

Wood Hite had kept his eyes on Crabb, and that astute individual was rattled when he read the news in the papers.

He disappeared from the city, and then Jesse feared that Cole and Siroc might get the worst of it.

But, much to Jesse's joy, he saw Cole appear at the breakfast table the next morning after the news reached the city, and the white marks were again placed on the black horse.

"He left the city and the gate receipts have doubled," said Jesse to Cole, as soon as they were in their private room. "You played your part well."

"Yes; and a dozen posses are out after us," replied Cole.

"I wish I could have been with you," Jesse added. "I am eager to get out on the road again."

"So am I," said Jim.

"And I, too," put in Frank.

"But we are making money here," Jesse explained.

"Yes; but it can't last long, for we have but two more horses to get," and Frank looked over a memoranda which he had been keeping.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### FOILED.

They had but two more horses to buy, and dozens were coming in to be tried on the race track against the now famous white horse.

Howard had bought eleven Winchester rifles, and eight of his men rode round the track daily at full speed, with the rifles slung over their shoulders.

The spectators shouted themselves hoarse, and sports bet money that in less than ninety days the James Boys would either be killed, put in prison, or driven out of the State.

At last the tenth horse was bought, and the excitement reached fever heat.

One thousand dollars had been paid for each animal, and a finer lot of fast horses could not be found in all the country.

Howard announced in the papers that on Thursday the ten horses would be ridden by their riders round the track for five miles in pursuit of the white one, who would be ridden by himself to represent Jesse James in flight.

A prize of \$1,000 was to be given to the rider who outran all the others, and \$500 to the second best.

The white horse was to have 200 yards the start of the pursuers.

As the track was to have 10 per cent. of all winnings, three prominent citizens were selected to hold the stakes in the office of the race course.

They accepted, and the whole city was on the qui vive to see the novel and exciting affair.

The gates were to be opened at ten o'clock, at least four hours before the great race was to take place, and 50 cents admission charged.



Up in a little room in the widow's house, on the night before the race was to take place, Jesse James and his bandits sat round a little table on which was a single candle.

"To-morrow we strike the blow," Jesse said. "At noon I'll go to the bank and draw out all the money we have there. One of the girls will ride Siroc out to Wiccabaw Creek, where we'll meet her, and she can ride one of those \$1,000 horses back home. When the money is all in we'll go into the office and scoop the last dollar of it. There ought to be at least \$50,000 up, and there may be even more than that. As soon as we have got it we'll rush out, spring into the saddle and dash out through the gate. Then we'll make for our old free life again, with the best horses in the State, for which the people paid."

"By George! but it will go all round the world!" said Cole.

"Yes," assented Jim, "and it will be the boldest raid ever made by outlaws in any part of the world."

They went to bed early, save the one on guard at the stable where Siroc was. The guard had never been removed since the night Jim shot four times at a visitor whom he could not hit.

But no further attempt was made on the stable, as it was known to be guarded day and night.

Just before daylight one of the widow's daughters left the stable on Siroc.

Jesse saw her off and then returned to the house.

At an early hour vast crowds assembled at the race course, and four hours later at least 10,000 people were inside the gates.

Over \$50,000 were put up on the races, and three prominent citizens held the money as stakes in the office near the gate.

An hour before the races were to begin a man entered and said to the man in charge of the stakes in the office:

"My name is Crabb, a detective."

"Ah! You once captured Jesse James and most of his gang?" said the man in charge.

"Yes; and I've been after him again. Here's the chief of police of Kansas City, who will vouch for my identity."

"Yes; this is Mr. Crabb," said the chief of police, who came in with him in citizen's clothes.

The three prominent citizens shook hands with Crabb and asked him into the inner office.

He went in and sat down at a small table.

"I have been after them again," he said. "They laugh at Howard's scheme to break 'em up, and have even threatened to come here and rob him of the gate receipts right under his nose. I have traced them to this city, and have reason to believe that they are now somewhere in this crowd, ready to demand the receipts of the day at the muzzles of their revolvers."

"My God! chief!" gasped one of the men, turning white as a sheet, "why don't you send a force here at once?"

"I have no power to send my men outside the city limits," replied the chief of police.

"What shall I do?" the other asked.

"Send every dollar to the bank in the city," the chief said.

"Who'll take it?"

"Well, I'll get some friends to help," said the chief.

"Let us five go with it," suggested Crabb.

"Yes; that will do," the chief said.

"There's nearly \$75,000," said the man in charge of the money.

They divided it and slipped out with it, locking the door.

On the door was a notice:

"Will open after the races are run."

Half an hour later, while the great crowd was eagerly watching for the appearance of the horses and their armed riders, Jesse James and his bandits repaired to the office of the treasurer to hold up the stakeholders.

He saw the notice on the door.

"What does this mean?" he demanded.

No one knew.

"The men have gone to see the races," said Clell.

"But they should have remained here," Jesse said.

"Yes," assented Cole.

"Look for 'em in the crowd," suggested Bob.

They did look.

But failed to find them.

The crowd was becoming impatient.

Jesse was in a rage.

He inquired of some who were about the office if they knew where the stakeholders had gone.

"They went to town," said one man.

"To town!"

"Yes."

"How do you know?"

"I saw 'em."

"Who went with them?"

"The chief of police and a stranger."

"Chief of police!"

"Yes; and a stranger."

"What sort of a looking man was the stranger?"

He was described.

They recognized Crabb.

Jesse stepped aside with Cole and said:

"I fear Crabb is on to us."

"So do I."

"As we are about to leave we may as well shoot him down."

"Yes; if we can find him."

A man came up and said he had a note from one of the stakeholders for Mr. Howard.

"Let me have it," said Jesse. "I am Howard."

He tore open the note and read:

"Dear Sir—Detective Crabb informed us that he had reason to believe that Jesse James and his infamous gang would be at the race track to-day, and advised us to bring in all the money in our hands and leave it at the Kansas City Bank. We did so. Please tell all interested where we are, so as not to cause any uneasiness. All payments will be made at the bank, where a strong guard will be kept over the money. Yours truly, J. CHIPMAN."

There was a cold, steely glitter in Jesse's eyes as he read the note, and a compression about his lips which the bandits knew meant ill to somebody.

But as the messenger who brought the note was standing by he did not let any expression escape him, save to say:

"Just wait till I can write a note to Mr. Chipman, please."

"Yes, sir," replied the man.

Jesse took a pencil and wrote on the back of the note:

"Dear Sir—You did right in promptly removing the funds. Keep a guard over them and ask Mr. Crabb to hurry back here and give us the benefit of his knowledge and experience. The races are about to begin. In haste. Yours truly, JAMES HOWARD."

Handing the note back to the messenger, with a five-dollar bill for his services, he said:

"Please hurry and place that in Mr. Chipman's hand as soon as you can."

"Yes, sir," and the man took the note and hurried away with it.

"What is it, Jesse?" Cole asked.

"We are foiled," said the bandit chief.

"How—who by?"

"All the money has been taken to the bank in this city and we can't get at it."

"The deuce!"

"Yes."

"What caused it?"

"Crabb."

"Crabb! Is he here?"

"Yes," and Jesse repeated the words in Chipman's note and his reply.

"Crabb isn't sure," he added, "and may come out again. All of you keep together. Ten men with Winchesters can hold up a thousand who are not armed. If Crabb comes we'll riddle him and then ride away."

"But if he should come with an armed force?" Cole asked.

"Winchesters are the best arms. We have the best horses and can easily get away. I'll order the gates closed and tell the gateman to report to me any arrivals. We'll go and run the races in order to quiet the people and remain to see if Crabb will really come."

They returned to the track to make the races.

Jesse was mounted on the white horse which had set the standard of speed for the others, and rode in front of the grandstand, where he sang out in loud tones:

"I have just received a note from Mr. Chipman, saying that all money placed in his hands to-day will be paid out by him at the Kansas City Bank. There was such a large amount of it that he and his two assistants decided that it would be the part of wisdom to remove it to a place of safety, and I am sure you will all agree with him. The race will now be run."

Of course they cheered him and the white horse. He was a superb horseman and the animal was a magnificent one.

Then ten armed pursuers awaited the signal to start, and when it was given the white horse dashed away round the splendid race track, 200 yards ahead of the others.

With a yell the bandits went off like an avalanche.

The ten magnificent horses went like the wind, and the spectators rose up and yelled as they went by.

It was a half-mile track, so they had to go ten times around it to run five miles.

It was a race such as had never been seen in America before, as the five miles were to be run without a stop.

"What splendid riders!" cried one.



"Howard knows his business!" said another.

"Just look at the white horse!"

"Watch the iron gray!"

"See that bay forging ahead!"

"Look out for the star-faced!"

"Whoop!"

"Five hundred dollars on the iron gray!"

"What's your odds?"

"Even money!"

"They are in a bunch!"

"Give 'em a cheer! Hip-hip-hooray!"

Men and women went wild with excitement. They waved hats, caes and handkerchiefs as the white horse or his pursuers passed round.

"They're gaining on him!"

"Good by, Jesse James!"

They were gaining on the white horse.

Jesse was playing a game to keep up the interest.

They gained slowly but steadily on him, and as they passed under the wire in the last round they held him up, with their Winchesters leveled at him.

He sat on the white horse in front of the grandstand with his hands above his head, and his pursuers in a circle around him.

The vast crowd cheered him to the skies.

He sent a messenger to find out if anybody had come from the city.

"No," said the gateman.

"The jig is up," he said to Cole.

"Yes; but we might go to the bank and get the receipts of the day and the commissions. It would——"

"That's just what they want us to do. It would be a trap for us."

"That's so," said Frank.

"Yes," added Jim.

"Crabb has foiled us completely," Jesse said, "and we may as well skip out. We have made a big pile, anyhow, besides the horses, and I drew it out of the bank this morning."

"Yes; I think we had better skip out," said Cole, and they rode to the stable to give their horses a chance to recover their wind a little after the five miles run.

It took that big crowd nearly an hour to pass out through the gates, and during that time the bandits were rubbing down their horses.

Jesse gave the signal to mount, and they sprang into the saddle and rode out behind the crowd and struck out for Wiccabar Creek.

They found the girl there with Siroc.

"I thought you would never come," she said to Jesse.

"I said I would, and that you could have believed," he replied, as he dismounted.

"Yes; I really didn't doubt it, but it seemed so long to wait."

"Cole, give her your horse and take the white one," said Jesse, and he assisted her to the ground and up on the other.

Then he gave her a roll of bills for her services, kissed her hand and said:

"I don't know when we may meet again, but tell your mother I shall not neglect her. Always insist that you did not know we were the James Boys and people will believe you. Good-by!"

The others all shook hands with her, and then she rode away toward the city.

The bandits turned southward, and a little before sunset held up a stage and took all the effects of four passengers, which didn't amount to much.

But it startled the State the next day.

The driver reported the white and black horses as working together. And then Crabb's name came in again for praise for having saved the money for the people who attended the last day's race.

The entire State was startled at the audacity of the bandits.

"It was the boldest raid ever made by bandits in the history of brigandage," said the paper which had done so much to help on the project of the man Howard.

"They came here and got the people, press and city officials to help them procure the fastest horses in the State," wailed another.

"They have played us for suckers!" said still another paper, "and the whole nation is laughing at us, and all we can do is to put up a sickly sort of a smile in return."

"What's the matter with Crabb?" another one asked. "Has he lost his cunning? How did he come to let Jesse James play us such a hand as that? He showed up on the last day and did well. Where is he now?"

The widow and her daughters, when accused by citizens, asked:

"Why should I be wiser than you? If they deceived a whole city what could you expect a poor widow to know?"

"The fat got up," said the chief of police, with a laugh. "I hold my hand over my mouth."

## CHAPTER XVII.

### IN THE SADDLE AGAIN.

Detective Crabb did not stay to answer the ten thousand questions people wanted to put to him.

He did not want to see anybody but Jesse James and his bandits.

"Jesse got the bulge on me for once," he said to himself, as he thought the matter over. "He knew I was in the city making investigations, and sent his black horse and three or four of his men to hold that stage. That got me. I made up my mind that Howard was all right, and struck out for the country. The laugh is on me as well as on the city. I finally dropped to it, and laid a trap at the bank to get him. But he was too sharp to come into it. He lost his ten thousand dollars rather than take the risk. By George! but he is no fool! I've got to go after him again. They now have the best horses and the best arms in the world."

On the third day after leaving Kansas City the bandits struck the town of Greene.

It was a small place, but quite wealthy.

There was a bank there, and they rode up to it, dismounted and put out a guard.

In ten minutes the vault was gutted of all the cash, amounting to many thousands of dollars, crammed into small bags and taken out to the horses.

Crack!

A bullet came from somewhere across the square and knocked the hat from Cole Yonnger's head.

"That was a good long-range shot," said Jim, as he picked up Cole's hat and handed it to him.

"Yes; and too close to be funny," replied Cole.

Crack!

Another bullet whizzed close by Clell Miller's head, and he exclaimed:

"That was for me, but it didn't get me!" and he sprang into the saddle, as did the others, and they went dashing out of the town.

Crack!

Crack!

Shots were fired from two other houses, but they went wide of the mark.

They had Winchesters, but did not stop to use them.

They would rather depend on the speed of their splendid horses.

"That was a clean job, boys!" cried Jesse.

"Yes; one of the neatest," said Cole.

"But one of those shots was close," put in Jim. "Had it been two inches lower Cole would have been wiped out."

"Yes; but I have had as close calls before," Cole replied. "A miss is as good as a mile."

They were not pursued.

The citizens of Greene had heard that the bandits had procured the best horses in the State, and hence they could not be overtaken by any horses they had.

All they could do was to appeal to the authorities for protection, and telegraph in every direction the fact of the presence of the James Boys in the county.

The white and black horses were mentioned, and it was not known which one Jesse James was riding.

"Now for Hall, boys!" said Jesse, as they hurried along the highway.

Hall was another little town like Greene, and there was a bank there.

They hoped to get there that night before the news of the affair at Greene got ahead of them.

But on the way they met a posse of twenty-two men at a place where there were no woods to dodge into.

Both parties came to a full halt.

The posse outnumbered them two to one.

"Cover them, boys!" said Jesse, and the bandits leveled their Winchesters at them.

"Don't shoot! Don't shoot!" yelled at least half the posse.

"Hold up your hands!"

Half the posse turned and fled as fast as their horses could take them.

The other half held up their hands.

"Great Scott!" gasped Jim Cummins. "Let's go through 'em, Jesse!"

"Yes," said Jesse, and then he raised his voice and said: "Dis-mount and come here two at a time—hands up!"

They did so, and their wallets and watches were taken from them.

But they were not worth much.

"Why is it that only poor men turn out to catch us?" Jesse asked. "I never struck a posse yet that could chip in two hundred dollars in cash."

"There are ten poor men to one rich one, I reckon," said the deputy sheriff.

"There may be something in that, but we never harm poor people. We pay them well when we have anything to do with them."



"That's all very well, but we don't want any highwaymen running things as you do in this State," the deputy sheriff said.

"Of course not," returned Jesse. "But we have to do this or die like dogs. Quantrell's men have been shot down wherever found, and life is as dear to them as to anyone else."

"But they didn't think so in Quantrell's day."

"No; for a war was raging then, and war means death and destruction. The war is over now."

"That's so," said one of the posse, "and this thing ought to stop."

"That's what I think," said Jesse. "If the governor will issue a full pardon to us, we will disband at once. But as long as we are attacked, we will defend ourselves."

"But how is it you rob people?"

"Because we can't earn a livelihood any other way. We are not permitted to go into business like you fellows. Go back to your horses and return home. We have made up our minds to defend ourselves hereafter, instead of running away from posses."

The men returned to their horses and remounted.

The bandits rode back till they struck another road, and then made fast time to get out of the way of the posses on the main highway.

When they had gone some ten miles they found that night was at hand and a prospect of a very stormy one, too.

"There's a small farm-house over there on the hillside," said Clell, pointing to a white cottage a half a mile away across the fields.

"Yes; but how can we get there?"

"There's a lane leading to it from somewhere," said Jim.

"Of course; but it will be dark in half an hour. Tear down that fence and let's go across the field."

Two of them got down and tore away the fence so the horses could go over it. Then they put it up again.

When half way to the house they found the lane and got into it.

When near the house they saw a small barn and a stable that could not shelter more than four horses.

But a heavy storm was coming up and they had no other recourse.

Jesse dismounted and went up to the door and knocked.

A comely young woman came in response to his summons.

"Miss," he said, removing his hat, "there's a storm coming up and here's eleven of us looking for shelter."

"Eleven men! Dear me! Our house is so small! Of course you can come in," and she held the door open for him.

"But our horses—where can we put them?"

"You can put four in the stable, and the others can stand under the cow-shed in the rear, but it leaks awfully."

"Thanks. That's better than standing out in the pelting rain," and he ran to the others to tell them what she had said.

They put the horses away and then returned to the house with their rifles just as the rain drops began to fall.

"Have you been hunting?" the young woman asked of Jesse.

"Yes. We have been out for several days looking for the James Boys. Are you here all alone?"

"No. My mother and young brother live here. My brother has gone to a neighbor's on an errand, and my mother is an invalid."

"How old is your brother?"

"Seventeen years."

"And do he and you do all the work on this place?"

"Yes."

"What do you raise?"

"Chickens; and we keep two cows."

"Ah! I see. Well, now, can you manage to get us a good supper?"

"I can give you bread, butter, eggs and tea," she replied.

"That will do, and we will pay you better than if you had sent them to market."

She went out into the kitchen and was soon at work.

Clell followed her and said:

"I am a handy man about a house. Just tell me what I can do and you will see what a good boy I am."

She laughed and said:

"We keep everything handy, so I need not trouble you."

"You will let me stay here with you, at least, won't you?"

"Yes, if you wish to," and she went on with the cooking.

"Dear me, how it pours!" she exclaimed. "I am afraid brother has been caught in it."

"He has sense enough to stay in till it's over, hasn't he?"

"Yes; but he won't do it for fear that mother and I might get uneasy about him."

"Oh, that's it, eh? Well, it's a warm rain and won't hurt him."

"No; but it will hurt his clothes, for he had put on his Sunday suit."

"Oh, I see! There's another girl over at the neighbor's," and Clell laughed so heartily that the young woman took quite a liking to him.

"You laugh just like brother," she said. "I am sure you would like each other."

"I would like to see him, and hope he will come here before we leave; but if there is a girl in the case he won't be home till midnight."

The eggs and tea were soon ready for the table, and Clell helped her carry them in. They sat down and ate heartily, and then got out their pipes for a smoke.

The rain poured down in torrents, and Jesse turned to the young woman and said:

"I hope the barn doesn't leak."

"No, it does not—why?"

"Because we shall have to sleep there to-night."

"I am sorry we have no room in the house for you."

"We are used to such things, and are only too glad that we have a place where the rain can't reach us."

"Shall I have breakfast for you in the morning?" she asked.

"Yes, if you please. If the rain stops we shall leave a little after sunrise."

"I can have it ready for you by that time. There's some hay up in the loft of the barn which you can give to your horses."

"Thanks," said Jesse, as he and his men prepared to go out.

"You don't know when your brother will return?"

"No; but I expect him any moment. Why do you ask?"

"Because we shall have a guard out to see that our horses are not stolen, and we want to be careful and not mistake him for a horse thief."

She laughed, and said he would come straight to the house and not be about the barn.

They went out and made their way up to the hayloft in the little old barn, and Clell was selected for the first turn at guard duty.

In half an hour he saw a dark figure go by toward the house.

He followed, and heard the young woman ask:

"Is that you, brother?"

"Yes," he replied.

Clell then went back to the stable and stood in the dark shadow of the building till it was time to call up his relief.

He called up Frank James, and then lay down on the hay and was soon fast asleep.

Half an hour later the bandits were awakened by an unearthly yell from Frank, and they hurried down to see what the trouble was.

They found him lying on the ground and unconscious.

Jim drew out his dark lantern, lighted and flashed its rays into Frank's face.

He was white as a sheet, and yet they could not see that he was hurt anywhere.

In a few minutes Frank came to with a groan, and asked:

"Did you see it?"

"See what?" Jesse asked.

"It was a ghost or the devil."

"Oh, hang your blasted superstition!" angrily exclaimed Jesse. "Jim, take his place. He is worse than any schoolboy about ghosts and hobgoblins."

"It's no superstition at all," said Frank, as he got up on his feet. "I saw it as plainly as I see that light."

"Bah!"

"What was it like, Frank?" Cole asked.

Frank was too much broken up to give anything like an intelligible description of what he had seen.

"See what?" Jesse asked.

"Hello!" called a boyish voice from the house. "Did you see it?"

"The ghost."

"Yes," said Frank, "I saw it, and it almost scared the life out of me."

"I say, young man," called Jesse, "come out here and give us an explanation of this thing."

"Wait till I dress and I will," and they waited but a few minutes, after which a youth of seventeen appeared in his shirt sleeves, and bareheaded.

"You live here, do you?" Jesse asked him.

"Yes. I was born in that house."

"Well, tell us what you know about this ghost, if that's what it is."

"Oh, it's a real ghost. It comes here at any time in the night. It's an uncle of mine, who was murdered by Quantrell's men right over there by that corner one night, and he has come here so often we have got used to it and don't mind it. Mother has tried to sell the place and move away, but nobody will buy it and so we have to stay here."

"I told you it was a ghost," said Frank, whose teeth were rattling in his head. "I know one when I see it, but I can't get used to 'em."

"We had to get used to it," said the youth. "We couldn't help ourselves."

"Well, I'd take to the woods," said Frank.

"Oh, they never hurt anybody except to scare 'em," the youth said.



"I'd just as soon be killed as scared to death," returned Frank. "We had better go at once, boys."

"I'll be hanged if I do," said Jesse. "I am going to have my nap out and a good breakfast in the morning. Jim, you are not afraid of shadows. Keep your eyes open till sunrise."

"I will," Jim returned, and the others followed Jesse up into the loft again.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### CONCLUSION.

When the sun rose the next morning, Jim Cummins was not to be found.

The bandits hunted for him everywhere about the premises of the Widow Casey.

None of them could remember having heard any noise of any kind during the night after Frank's adventure with the ghost.

"This is strange—very strange," Jesse remarked, as he looked about the barn and stable.

"Yes," said young Casey, "I never heard anything, either."

"Maybe he has got tired looking for the James Boys and has gone home," said the young woman.

"Very likely," said Jesse, dryly, "but we are not in the habit of deserting our comrades that way."

"I'll bet the ghost took him," said Frank to Cole.

"Nonsense," said Cole.

"I believe it, anyhow."

"Oh, shut up such nonsense!" put in Jesse.

Frank said no more, and they went in to breakfast.

The meal over, Jesse gave the woman one hundred dollars, and said:

"This is for you and your mother."

"Oh, my! do you mean to give us all this money?"

"Yes; and we are going to leave the missing man's horse with you. If he does not return the horse is yours."

"Oh, dear! do you mean that?"

"Yes. If he comes for him he will pay you for his keep and take him away. If he does not, your brother may be able to sell him after three months. I know he cost one thousand dollars."

They mounted and rode away, and an hour later were on their way toward the centre of the State.

"What do you think has become of Jim?" Cole asked of Jesse.

"I think Crabb got him."

"Crabb!"

"Yes; it looks just like some of his work."

Cole looked serious.

He was afraid of Crabb.

"We should have put out two instead of one guard," Jesse added, "but I didn't once think of it."

"I can hardly think he has kept up with us since we left Kansas City."

"That fellow beats all records and upsets all calculations," Jesse remarked, "and I am puzzled to know how we are to get rid of him."

"Where are we going now?"

"We'll go to Baily, the county seat, and see if we can do any business there."

"Do you know the way there?"

"Yes. It is only a few miles from here."

They kept out of the town and waited for night to come so as to get into the town without being noticed.

There were two hotels in the place and it was decided that they should go in two at a time and put up at the two hotels.

It was easily done.

The white horse went to one and the black to the other.

"What's the news, landlord?" Jesse asked, as soon as he had washed his face and hands.

"Our people have been excited all day over the capture of one of the James Boys' gang," the landlord replied.

"Is that so?"

"Yes. The detective brought him in to-day, and he is in our jail now."

"Well, well! that's good news. Which one is it—Jesse or Frank?"

"He is not either, but one of the band. The detective says his name is Cummins, and that an indictment for murder has been standing against him for several years."

"Yes; I heard of him. Who is the detective?"

"I believe they call him Crabb. He is the same man who captured Jesse himself once."

"Ah! I have heard of him, too. Is he in town?"

"No; I believe he left right after turning his prisoner over to the jailer."

"Well, I'd like to hear of his capturing Jesse James. That fellow

held up the Kearney stage once when I was a passenger, and I'd go a thousand miles to see him behind prison bars."

"So would I," added Cole. "It's a disgrace to the State that he has not been captured or driven out of it."

"Yes; so it is," assented Jesse.

"They'll get him some day," put in the landlord.

"Yes, I hope so."

Half an hour later Cole found out that the jail was not guarded.

But the citizens were talking about getting up a vigilance committee and hanging the prisoner.

He came and told Jesse about it.

Jesse went out among several saloons, and found the citizens talking lynch law openly and boldly.

"They'll hang Jim before morning," he said, "if we don't get him out."

"It looks that way," Cole returned.

They all got together, and then resolved to pretend to be lynch-ers and go to the jail, taking enough citizens along to cover their object.

In the barroom of the hotel where he was stopping Jesse said to the crowd:

"I was held up by Jesse James in the Kearney stage once, and will be one of twenty to go to the jail, take that fellow out, put him on a horse and let the horse walk from under him. Who will go with me?"

"I! I! I!" sang out the nine bandits in the room, and a score of others joined them at once.

"How many of you can get horses inside a half hour?"

A dozen said they could.

"Get 'em and come to the stable of this hotel."

They hurried away and Jesse and the bandits were the first on hand.

The others came, and Jesse told each man to put a handkerchief over his face.

They did so, and then they rode off.

The bandits had their Winchesters with them.

Jesse sent five of the citizens to bring the jailer out of his house.

The jailer was in favor of the lynching, and made but a feeble protest against it, laughing all the time.

"That's all right, jailer," said Jesse, "if we don't take care of him the James Boys will. Fetch him out, boys. Lynch law is better than no law at all."

Jesse remained on his horse, but Clell and Wood went up with the mob to bring the prisoner down.

Jim turned pale as he heard their voices; they were strange to him.

But Clell gave one of the old James Boys' signals which told him he was all right, and so he made no resistance when they seized him.

"Bring him down!" cried one of the citizens, who was in earnest about the proposed lynching.

"Yes, bring him down," said another.

"Hang him!"

"Shoot him!"

"No shooting!" cried Bob Younger.

"No, no shooting!" cried Clell. "We'll hang him!" and they dragged him down-stairs to where a horse was ready for him.

"Put him on this horse and a halter round his neck!" cried Jesse, and the crowd began to increase at a rapid rate.

The news had spread that the prisoner was to be lynched, and many citizens hurried to the jail.

The moment he was in the saddle Jesse said to him:

"Now—run for it!"

The horses made a dash and a dozen people were knocked down.

In another minute they were dashing out of the town, and some of the would-be lynch-ers saw they had been played for fools.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Jesse. "That was quick work, boys!"

"Yes," replied Cole, "and neatly done, too."

"I thought my time had come," Jim said, "until I heard the old signal. Then I knew I was all right."

"But how did you get in there?" Jesse asked him.

"The ghost took him!" put in Bob before Jim could answer, at which there was a laugh.

"Ghost be hanged! Crabb held me up with a seven-shooter and I went along with him."

"Of course. I would have gone, too," Jesse said.

"He marched me to jail, and on the way said we had played it well in Kansas City."

"Of course we did," and Jesse laughed, "and some day we'll play it well on him, and that will be a day when we'll all celebrate a great victory."

"He says he'll get us all yet."

"Maybe he will, but I don't believe it."

"Nor I!" chorused the others.

"Halt! Hands up!" came in a harsh voice from the woods on the right of the road.



Every bandit leaned forward on his horse's neck till the animal's body interposed between him and the woods, and the horses dashed away up the road at full speed.

Crack!

Crack!

Cr-r-rack!

Jim and his horse rolled in the dust.

"I'm hit!" groaned Clell.

"Hold on to your seat!" cried Jesse.

A mile further on they halted.

"Where are you hit, Clell?" Jesse asked.

"It's a flesh wound on the shoulder," replied Clell. "I don't think it will amount to much."

"Where's Jim?" Frank asked.

"He and his horse rolled in the dust when that volley came," said Bob.

"Yes. I saw him go down," put in Wood Hite, "but I think it was the horse that was hit."

"Yes: if the horse fell he was hit. Jim will get away, for the woods were on both sides of the road where he fell," remarked Cole.

"Hark! they are following us."

The sounds of pursuit were unmistakable. They came on the night air plain enough.

"Come, let's be off," Jesse said, and he led the way, followed by the white horse.

Five miles farther on they turned into a small crossroad to avoid the dangers of the main highway.

By daylight Jesse discovered that they were within an hour's run of the Chalk Bluffs, on the top of which he had once been captured by Crabb.

"We'll go there," he said, "and rest till the posses go home."

"How about the man on the crest?" Frank asked.

"I only hope he will appear there again. I could not set a better trap for him."

An hour later they reached the Bluffs and made their way down to the plateau, where stood the log cabin in front of the cavern. They entered the cavern, and there we shall leave them for the present, promising our readers that they shall follow them again in the mad career of crime to other fields and scenes of adventure.

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